The Listening Artist:
On Listening As An Artistic Practice Beyond Sound Art

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PhD
September 2017

The Listening Artist: On Listening As An Artistic Practice Beyond Sound Art

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the University of the Arts London

CRiSAP (Creative Research into Sound Arts Practice)
University of the Arts, London

September 2017

ABSTRACT

This study's original contributions to knowledge are evidencing that:

a) There is the position of the listening artist that is a distinct practice to that of the sound artist, operating with quite different political, philosophical and aesthetic concerns.

b) Sound art's canon of listening is insufficient for accounting for the range of listening at play in such practice.

This study contributes to sound art's debates on listening and advocates for the position of the listening artist. It begins with an overview of listening within sound art and explores the canon of listening within the discipline as associated with writers and practitioners such as Theodor Adorno, John Cage, Pauline Oliveros, Pierre Schaeffer and Hildegard Westerkamp. Using Scott's own work as a case study the efficacy and relevance of this canon to practice are critically appraised. The key finding from this initial research is that sound art's canonical listenings are relevant and useful in particular contexts but do not account for many of the social and inter-personal aspects of listening present in the works explored. This is due to many of the modes and strategies of listening in the canon being concerned with a musical understanding of listening as a means of following abstract sonic discourse, and also to a reliance on phenomenology as a heuristic tool for analysing this listening. These approaches result in a tendency to understand listening as an atomist process (Lipari, 2014) – a dynamic between an individual and a sound, based in notions of skill and technique – rather than a holistic 'back- and forth-' (Helin, 2012) between listeners, and with the wider social and political context that affords that listening.

The thesis goes on to propose a practice of listening that operates beyond sound art, one that can be accounted for through analysis of dialogical and participatory art practices (Kester, 2004. Bishop, 2012), communications studies (Bakhtin, 1975. Helin, 2012.), philosophy (Corradi Fiumara, 1995. Lipari, 2014), gender theory (Ratliffe, 2005. Lloyd, 2009), literary theory (Hume, 2012, Brittingham Furlonge, 2013) and artistic practice (Rajni Shah, Sonia Boyce, Ultra-Red). This position of the listening artist rejects modernist and post-modernist models of art-making and reception and embraces an approach based on communication and communality. The study proposes ways in which this listening praxis can critically engage with existing artistic practice, can be a methodology for developing new work and can constitute an artistic output in and of itself.

Scott offers a number of his own projects as further case studies, exploring the nascent position of the listening artist within his work and analysing his own trajectory from being a sound artist to becoming a listening artist.

Keywords: Listening, sound art, dialogic, dialogical art, listening artist, sound artist

USB FILE LISTING & ACCESSIBILITY

Please insert the accompanying USB stick into a computer/laptop and refer to each document on the USB in relation to its discussion within the thesis text. Each file on the USB relates to specific discussions listed on the page numbers below. Sources and references for the images embedded in the thesis document can be found within the "List of Illustrations".

Text material

1. An Emergent Glossary (Unfinished).pdf on p.23.
2. Oyez!.pdf on p.65
3. We Know What We Like.pdf on p.108
4. Unpacking The Invisible Knapsack.pdf on p.166

Audio-visual material

5. Incidental Music.wav on p.43.
6. The Inaudible Archive excerpt.wav on p.60.
7. Yesterday (Tingle).mp4 on p.83
8. Liberation Through Hearing excerpt.wav on p.86
9. We Know What We Like radio segment.wav on p.120
10. Spaceship School instructional film.mp4 on p.132
11. Spaceship School dance film.mp4

These files can also be found at the following website address:
http://www.danscott.org.uk/thelisteningartist/

There are further explanatory notes on these files in the thesis appendix beginning on p.198.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It seems too obvious to couch these acknowledgements in terms of listening, but still I must, as it is in listening that these people have most helped me through these past six years.

Firstly, thank you to my supervisors, Cathy Lane and Angus Carlyle for a steady and generous listening to all my ideas and proposals. Their listening allowed me space to hear what was happening in my work and to formulate the ideas that constitute this thesis.

Thank you to all those collaborators mentioned inside these pages. Thank you for listening to me and for allowing me the privilege of listening to you, through working and talking together.

Thank you to family and friends for their support and a special thank you to my partner Trish Scott and my son Samuel, for sharing a listening only found in laughter and an abundance of joyful noise.

PREFACE

I'll start with me - I'm a listener. Hear me out. A confession of listening, partial, specific, mine:

I'm a man. I was born in London in 1978. British, with two Irish grandmothers and a Slovak grandfather. Born into an unhappy marriage, which ended when I was four. I have memories of listening to arguments and shouting, and the traffic on the road outside my window on Wellesley Road, West London.

I was raised by my mother. We lived relatively comfortably. My Mum was a dental nurse, did occasional cleaning jobs and received some state support. We had a nice two-bed flat in Chiswick.

When I was seven she remarried. A step-dad and a new home in the countryside. We entered into a standard kind of 1980s, new money, middle-class life. My mum and step-dad had both escaped the working-class through the grammar school system. Neither went to university, although my Mum did later in life (more or less the same time I went). My step-dad worked for various companies in managerial positions. My mum did social work.

We weren't a high-culture family. We listened to Phil Collins, Pink Floyd and the Beatles. We didn't go to art galleries or operas or read poetry. We watched Noel's House Party *on Saturday evenings. My step-dad had a few interesting books on the bookshelf (we had a bookshelf) like Burroughs'* Junkie *and Richard Brautigan's* In Watermelon Sugar *- flotsam from his days living in Earls Court in the late 1960s. Generally speaking, my elders were suspicious of intellectualism and 'high' art. It was something other people did, people with too much time or money.*

My dad, meanwhile, due to health issues, was on incapacity benefits and living with his mother (a fierce war widow who told endless tall tales that occupied my listening when we were together). In our Oxfordshire village, I was a London child with divorced parents, which was unusual in those parts.

Feeling like an outsider, I learnt to listen. I learnt to scope out and learn a place. I learnt to appreciate difference, my difference, that which distinguished me from others, and that which connected me. I enjoyed people, being around people, but I didn't contribute to discussions unless bidden or feeling confident enough to inject. I was quiet. I got on with it. Did my work. Made friends. Listened and listened. I changed schools again for secondary school. So, I had to make new friends. Listening anew.

At 19, I went to university and studied anthropology. It appealed to me, as it was a way to listen to others

far away from me, to hear other worlds. During my degree I took a year out to be a professional musician, playing in a punky drum'n'bass band. We got a record deal, spending six months in a studio recording our first record - listening aplenty, feedback, my oscillating synths, vocal overdubs again and again and again. It meant so much to me, but it ended in acrimony and exploitation, as bands so often do.

Slowly, through qualifications in anthropology, teaching and sound art, my listening became officially authorised. I was granted the privilege of being allowed to listen. And now I'm granted a rarer privilege, to consider my listening as an original contribution to knowledge. Yet beyond such academic authorization, I still listen, unapologetically, from a position of emotion. I allow sentiment and feeling to guide my listening: I empathise; I feel compassion. To my detriment perhaps. I seek to find communality and find pathos at my inability to secure it. So, I open myself to melancholy through my listening. My listening is partial, and I feel it to be absurd. My willingness to engage is countered by a belief that any engagement is futile and bound to fail. Yet, still I try, and this thesis is another moment in my history of listening. Another confession, of sorts.

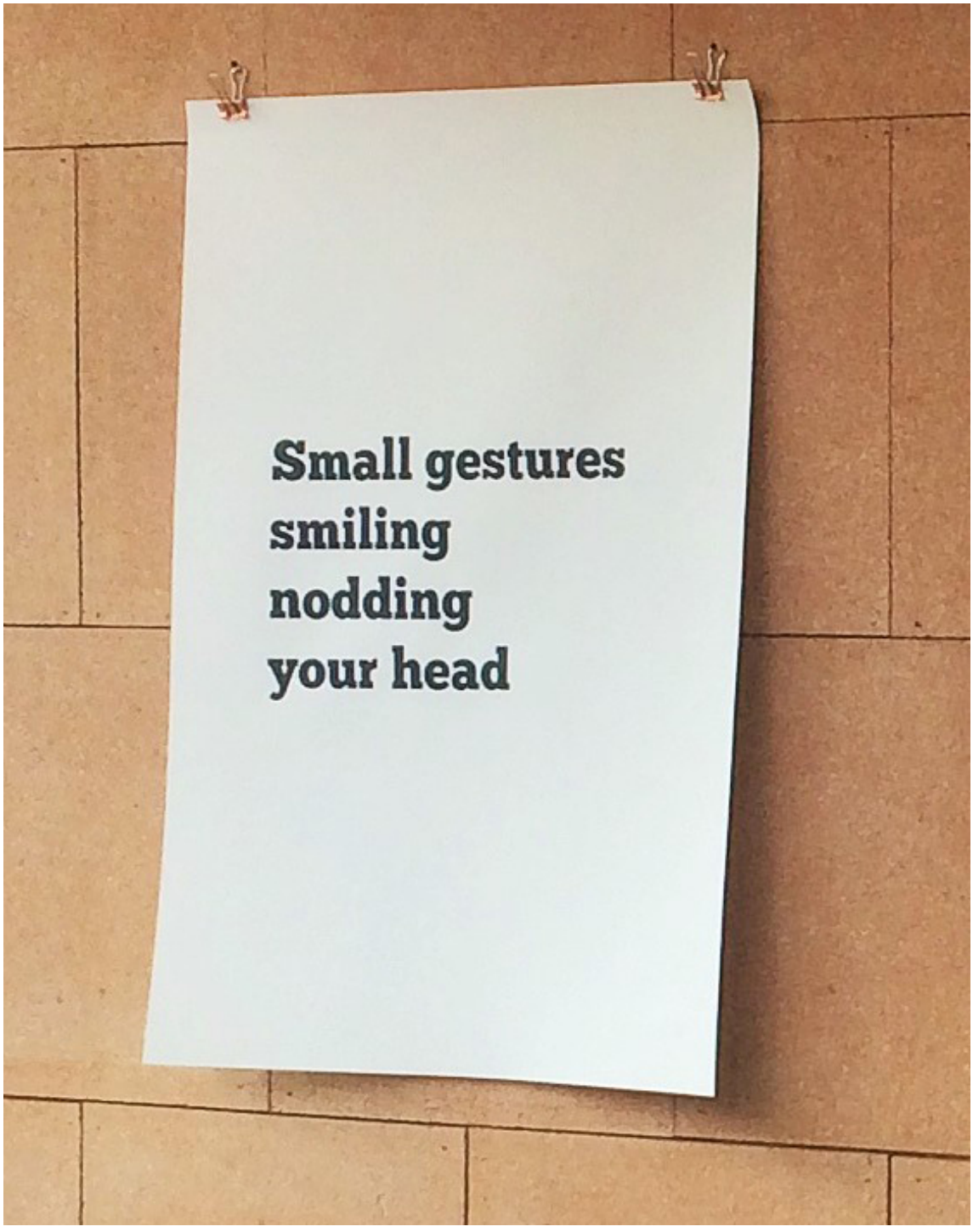

Figure 1: Scott, D. 2017. *A Space Made By Listening #1*

INTRODUCTION

1 The Listening Artist

I have prefaced this introduction with a short autobiographical text. I will not analyse it at length but I will say it stands as a testament to the listening I discuss within this thesis - a listening that is partial, contingent and cultured, and, in many cases, mine alone, not easily made universal or absolute nor born only of physiology. Moreover, it is a listening that often exists a long way from the academy or the noise of sound art praxis. It's the listening of people to each other, and of an artistic practice that deals in this listening.

My research begins here and ends at the close of Chapter Five with the same, simple proposition: there is an artistic practice of listening beyond sound art. I do not claim this as a new genre or movement, rather I propose that there exists the position of a listening artist that can be adopted by any practitioner, for as long or short a time as they wish. This listening artist is not an essentialised and bounded identity, rather it is a way of working and it is also a work in itself.

The listening of the listening artist is an artistic endeavour, not a form of counseling or diagnosing. The listening of a listening artist can be beautiful, funny, ironic or bland, or something other. Their listening is tangible and worthy of an audience's attention. Furthermore, once taken, the position of the listening art does not have to result in sound. The listening artist could draw, photograph, talk, sit, dance or simply listen.

This practice is underpinned by a listening criticality. This notion, derived from Irit Rogoff's writing on the difference between critique and criticality, denotes a theoretical approach that 'unravels the very ground on which it stands. To introduce questions and uncertainties in those places where formerly there was some seeming consensus about what one did and how one went about it' (Rogoff, 2003, p.1). This criticality demands that the listening artist remains open and willing to reassess and remodel their practice, and their approach to listening, in the face of new ways of working. It is a position I discuss in more depth during Chapter Five (p.148).

The notion of the listening artist may sound, on first reading, rather vague and open-ended, but this notion will be interrogated, nuanced, and expanded upon over these pages,

so that by our conclusion it will be apparent I am proposing something that has rigour and sustainability, and which is, indeed, an original contribution to knowledge.

The following pages map out my own journey towards this position of the listening artist, and also, necessarily and concurrently, seek to articulate the differences between this listening artist and the sound artist. To do this I take the reader on the same journey I undertook in my research, one where doubt and frustration were as generative as revelation and success, and where practice led me from working as a sound artist to forging this new understanding of my practice as a being one of listening. In this introduction I will offer an overview of the study, and also introduce some key ideas that form an ontological basis to this study.

2 Practice-led Research

This is a practice-led study. I am concerned with methods and process, as much as with artistic output. It is practice-led because it has 'operational significance' for artistic practice, to use the definition below given by Linda Candy:

> Practice-led Research is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. The main focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice. (Candy, 2006, p.1)

In practice-based research it is the creative artifact that is foregrounded and which 'forms the basis of the original contribution to knowledge' (ibid.). Throughout the thesis I use practice to explore theoretical and methodological concerns, and it is in this dialectic between outcomes and reflection that my original contribution to knowledge emerges.

I should add that the position of the listening artist I propose contains within it a critique of such a distinction between methodology and output. As we will discuss in Chapter Five, a listening practice is one where a mode of engagement also becomes a form of art. This is a knotty area, but it's important to state from the beginning. I do not make huge claims of originality for some of the artefacts I discuss (in fact I question the notion of what constitutes such an artifact as when applied to the work of the listening artist such distinctions become more fluid) but I do claim originality for the development of the position of the listening artist.

Much of the practice I write about is work I was undertaking in parallel with my PhD. For the first four years I was conducting my research part-time, and during the other hours of my week I was undertaking a range of commissions, teaching jobs, workshops and other freelance labour within the arts. I was keen to use these real-world situations as my field of enquiry. I was interested in listening as praxis and not just a theoretical talking-point so I was keen to explore this listening from within the kinds of projects I usually worked on as an artist[1]. So, my practice became a series of case studies in which I could explore, apply and critically reflect on the listenings I had begun to discuss in my writing. This relationship deepened over the course of the study. This was partly to do with my scholarly work becoming more imbued into my thinking as a practitioner - a reflexive listening practitioner - but also because I began ironing out contradictions and conflicts between the theory and practice (discussed during Chapter Two and Three) and moved, slowly, towards a more holistic praxis. Where the work discussed in Chapter Two sometimes sat awkwardly with the theory, by the projects discussed in Chapters Four and Five I couldn't easily say where the line between my PhD listening research and my work as a listening practitioner began or ended.

3 Overview Of Chapters

I have organised this thesis to reflect this dialectic between practice and theory. The thesis has a chronological structure, beginning in late 2011 and ending in summer 2017. I have attempted a dual voice in this regard with each chapter offering my thoughts and reflections at that moment of making and thinking, and also a more temporally cohesive and reflexive voice that ties these moments to the final conclusions that the thesis builds towards. These voices exist concurrently in the text, and I hope the reader feels suitably guided through both the historical details and the over-arching and contemporaneous (as

[1] This sometimes required me to work to two masters. In Chapter Two I discuss a year-long project conducted with Tate Modern's Families team. I told my colleagues at Tate Modern that I may write about the project in my PhD but I also had to accept the demands and conditions of Tate Modern, some of which were entirely antipathetic to my own research goals. Thankfully, I never felt compromised - I was attending to the listening in the work, however it was generated, and this could occur happily with all the more prosaic concerns about visitor numbers, or logistics, or publicity.

of 2017) argument that the thesis contains.

In Chapter One I discuss listening within sound art and the presence of a canon of listening within the discipline. This canon is constituted by a number of key sound art texts, books that have contributed to the definition of the genre, and to marking out its parameters. I explore Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner's *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* (2004), Caleb Kelly's *Sound* (2011) and Brandon LaBelle's *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (2006), texts that embrace the scattered discourses of listening in twentieth-century thought and package them as sound art's own. These include the work of Theodor Adorno, Pierre Schaeffer, Pauline Oliveros, John Cage and others.

I suggest that these listenings can be broadly defined as either modes or strategies, the former being descriptive models of listening that offer accounts of *how* we listen, and the latter are more prescriptive techniques of how we *could* and *should* listen, often with a view to extending and expanding our listening in a process of betterment, leading to new ways of hearing.

I explore the writing of Katherine Norman (1996), Lorraine Plourde (2008) and Peter Szendy (2008) to nuance this inquiry. Both Norman and Szendy seek to understand more precisely the nature of listening to sound, and how sound can communicate to the listener how it should be listened to. They both, in different ways, propose a form of listening dialectic, where listening can be determined by both the sound, and the subject. Plourde explores Theodor Adorno's ideas on listening within her ethnographic study of the Onkyō music scene in Tokyo.

Chapter One concludes by talking through my own concerns about these modes and strategies. Whilst I understood and respected their rigour and usefulness in certain fields, I also felt they were not always of concern to me in my own practice, and that my own listening was far more chaotic and idiosyncratic.

In Chapter Two I explore these ideas through two works: a year-long project called Open Studio that I conducted with Tate Modern's Families department (Scott, 21012a-e) in which I applied a number of the strategies of listening discussed in Chapter One, and a seminar entitled *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener?* (Scott, 2014a) in which I shared my ideas with a group of sound artists.

I explored strategies derived from Pierre Scaheffer's notion of acousmatic and reduced listening, Don Ihde's *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (1976), Salomé Voegelin's *Listening To Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (2010), Hildegard Westerkamp's essay 'Soundwalking' (1974) and Pauline Oliveros' practice of Deep Listening.

I found some purchase in many of the modes and strategies of listening I was exploring, but I also found a number of gaps and deficits in how they accounted for my work, and how they inspired new practice. The conclusion I came to was that many of these modes and strategies are derived from musical, and therefore sound-privileging, practices and that a significant number of them are also underpinned by a phenomenological approach to critically engaging with sound. The former means that other aspects of listening, mainly inter-personal, semantic, communicative and social listening are often ignored, in favour of listening as attending to abstracted sonic material that is separate from the social realm. And the latter results in an understanding listening as a resolutely individualist pursuit that is framed by the relationship of the perceiving self to the external realm of perceivable 'things'.

The hegemonic presence of these two positions meant that the social and dialogic aspects of listening that I began to understand as crucial to my work were not ably accounted for by sound art's canon of listening. I finish the chapter by speculating that there may be other models of listening that could account for this more satisfactorily, and also, perhaps more radically, that there may also be an artistic practice of listening that is not sound art, is not concerned with listening to sound as an abstract entity (or perhaps not even concerned with sound at all), and, instead, is concerned with people, and listening to and with people in a bid to communicate and understand.

It could be argued that Chapters One and Two are somewhat ancillary to the more positive proposals offered in Chapters Three to Five. Chapter Two discusses what amounts to a failed project - an attempt to account for the listening in my practice using the canon of listening that I uncover within sound art. It failed because I found the canon of listening I proposed did not adequately account for my own listening. But it is absolutely necessary to pursue, analyse and present this failure as it unfolded During the early stages of my research my own privileging of a musical, sound art-informed listening over any other forms of listening hindered my own understanding of my work, and also blinkered me to the possibility of other ways of making art through listening. By writing

of myself as a partial and restricted listener who then undergoes a transformation from a sound to a listening practitioner I embody and enact the shift in emphasis that is contained in the theoretical argument I am proposing.

In Chapter Three I offer details of this transformative moment by admitting that I had undervalued aspects of my practice that dealt primarily with listening in favour of works that were sound-focused (for example, gallery works that exist within a modernist paradigm, apart from audience or creator (Scott, 2014b and Scott, 2015a)). Realising this I decided to refocus my attention on projects I had undertaken that were more about people, communication and dialogue. I take stock of these ideas and explore more attempts within sound art to deal with these deficits. In keeping with the chronological structure of this study, I concede that by 2013 listening is being approached more broadly within sound art, with texts such as *On Listening* (2013) and the work of theorists and practitioners such as Ultra-Red and Michael Gallagher. Yet, I still argue that there is work to be done in understanding listening as an artistic practice that is not sound art.

In Chapter Four I discuss two projects, *We Know What We Like and We Like What We Know* (Scott and Scott, 2014c) and *Spaceship School* (Scott and Scott, 2015a), which, I argue, are not sound art works, but works of listening. I contextualise them with reference to Grant Kester's notion of dialogical art (2003), and further account for the listening present in the work through Jenny Helin's model of dialogic listening (2013). I also introduce the work of Jacques Rancière and argue that his ideas of community, *dissensus* and the artwork as an encounter, can ably give the listening artist an art-theoretical grounding. I introduce another layer of criticality within this approach by addressing Clare Bishop's critique of participatory art practice (2012) and Justine Lloyd's critiques of listening's appropriation by power (2009), exploring their relationship to my emergent listening artist.

In Chapter Five I mark out the position of the listening artist, mapping out the parameters, concerns and practices of such a position. The chapter is structured as a dialectic, where questions are asked of the listening artist, and their position emerges from this dialogue. This chapter offers my original contribution to knowledge in an expanded and conversational mode, but still with rigour and criticality.

4.1 The Case For Listening

I make something of a presupposition within this thesis that listening can be an object of study distinct from sound. This is not a given. A unique strand of inquiry into listening is a nascent and fragile one. Often it emerges from sound-focused discourses (such as sound art, or music, or communication studies) as an ancillary concern yet, as we will now explore, it can be its own quarry. I will discuss here two texts which have given me the strength to maintain this listening position and which have become bedrock to the ideas I discuss over the following chapters. What inspires me the most is that they do not pursue listening in relation to sound, but in relation to listening itself. The texts are Gemma Corradi Fiumara's *The Other Side of Language: A Philosophy of Listening* (1995) and Lisbeth Lipari's *Listening, Thinking, Being: The Ethics of Attunement* (2014).

4.2 Gemma Corradi Fiumara: *The Other Side Of Language*

Alvin Lucier argued in a 1979 essay, 'careful listening is more important than making sounds happen' (Lucier, 1979, p.430). Composer Toru Takemitsu claimed, 'the role of the performer is not to produce sound but to listen to it, to strive constantly to discover sound in silence. Listening is as real as making sound; the two are inseparable' (cited in Cox and Warner, 2004, p.63). In his essay 'On Listening', Brandon Labelle suggested that '[key] to sound arts is an active consideration of listening as an experience that locates us in the world' (Labelle, 2012). Listening's centrality as a practice within the sound arts is undisputed yet imbued in statements such as those above is a view that listening is still secondary to sound and emergent as a field of study. Sometimes this sense of lack is argued to be indicative of a general decline in listening ability in the Western world, a symptom of an oral culture evolving into a text-based culture (see Ong, 1982) and losing some of its communicative skills along the way. However, the paucity of discourse around listening, in hand with the calls from Lucier, Takemitsu and others to remember to listen, is a state of affairs with a long history, rather than a trend indicative of a contemporary lapse in sensory ability.

Listening has been in conflict with the insidious sound and the noisy utterance for around three thousand years, at least in the Western tradition, a point eloquently argued in Corradi Fiumara's book. Whilst I read her work early on in my research, it took me a number of years to disentangle my own sounding practice from my listening practice, and to move towards manifesting in my art what she articulates in her philosophical writing.

I refer to Corradi Fiumara in the thesis in key moments, but I would like the reader to hold onto her words as they negotiate this study, as they are not just passing references, but are imbued in the approach I seek to maintain throughout this study.

Corradi Fiumara begins by arguing that the opposition of sounding to listening is a dualism, with listening being one side of *logos* - the ancient Greek conception of the logic behind rhetoric and reasoning - the other being the utterance that announces such discourse. She notes that:

> No one would deny that talking necessarily implies listening, and yet no one bothers to point out, for example, that in our culture there has always been a vast profusion of scholarly works focusing on expressive activity and very few, almost none in comparison, devoted to the study of listening. (1995, p.5)

For Corradi Fiumara, listening has been neglected within discussions of reason and reasoning, and it is the opinion, the argument, the *verbal* that has been privileged at the expense of its reception. She notes that the listening position is resolutely different to this discursive archetype of Western rational thought. Taking up Heidegger's dissection of the phrase 'legein' (approximately translated as discourse or discussion) and his expansion of a definition of 'legein' to become 'letting-lie-together-before' (ibid.) she notes:

> The whole question hinges on the capacity of 'letting-lie-together-before' and of freeing our thinking from its 'constitutive' compulsion to submit to lysis – analyse – scrutinize, delve into, exhaust, probe the famous 'object of knowledge'. (p.16)

I suggest that sound, and the act of sounding, is resolutely on the same side of *logos* as Corradi Fiumara's 'expressive activity'. The act of sounding is distinct from listening and brings with it unique and particular epistemological concerns. The act of sounding does not necessarily require the act of listening and listening may not always require sound to function (one can, it has been proposed by John Cage, listen to silence). So, we can argue that listening is a field distinct from sounding. An epistemology of listening, or more likely, epistemologies of listening, need to be developed and understood apart from the sounds they may, or may not, be allied to. Listening is a way of knowing in the world, it is also contingent and diverse. Listening is an ally of sound, but neither the same thing as, nor a secondary function of, sound.

Beyond *logos*, Corradi Fiumara's listening also becomes a political and ethical hearing of the world. The listening position is one that is 'strong', which she contrasts with the 'power' of the word (p.57), and one that embraces the unheard, the dispossessed and all those not part of an elite that pervert logos by expunging listening in favour of gross and pervading utterances. The ethical efficacy of listening is a concern of this study, as it places listening into a social and political context and I shall return to this later in the thesis (see Chapters Four, p.134).

Within philosophy Corradi Fiumara claims listening's fragility and its radical philosophical position mean it slips below the radar of rational enquiry, existing in an ambiguous state that prompts ambivalence, an attitude that, for Corradi Fiumara, 'seems to tally with a partial sense of logos, understood precisely as a capacity for ordering and explaining, detached from any propensity to receive and listen.' (p.8). I would suggest this is the same within sound art. As Lucier and many others noted, much of the discourse on sound art, and sound and listening more generally, is concerned with 'making sounds happen', rather than what, or how, listening *is*. Listening is hard to pin down and perhaps necessarily so. If we accept Corradi Fiumara's proposition of an under-theorised listening, the approach necessary for dealing with listening, for weaving a discourse that retains its listening characteristic, is, inherently, a radical one, perhaps due to listening's neglect, and even oppression, within critical thinking. Yet it also opens up a new field of listening studies, distinct from sound studies: and, I will argue in this thesis, this also allows for position of the listening artist, as well as that of the sound artist.

4.3 Lisbeth Lipari: *Listening, Thinking, Being: Toward An The Ethics Of Attunement*

Published in 2014, I read Lipari's book in the later stages of my research, yet it seemed to be the fullest and most resonant response to Fiumara's work that I had encountered over the course of my study. Lipari's book is not about art, rather it offers a holistic and embracing account of listening encompassing linguistics, philosophy and ethics. Like Corradi Fiumara[2], she recognises a lack of research into listening within discussions of communication (p.98) and seeks to address this imbalance. What appealed to me about her work is its resistance to reducing listening to an individualist experience operating within notions of individual skill or endeavour. Rather Lipari writes about listening as a

[2] Lipari devotes a chapter of her book to Corradi Fiumara's work, recognising its influence on her work.

fundamental human activity that situates the subject in a wider social, cultural, and philosophical context. She critiques the contemporary trend to encourage 'better' listening, noting that 'today most research about listening takes a largely atomistic perspective that aims to improve listening processes so that we may become more effective and better listeners' (p.99). This notion of the 'atomist' articulated my own concerns that the listenings present in sound art's canon were all too often focused on individual experience, rather than reflecting how listening is a cultured, historical and contingent undertaking, or accounting for more inter-subjective, dialogic modes or strategies of listening. Moreover, Lipari's book negotiates this reality in hand with a keen awareness of listening's sensual and non-conceptual aspects. She strives for a holistic rather than atomist understanding of her quarry, asking 'how does one listen beyond the schemas, categories and dualistic thinking of the conceptual mind?' (ibid.) and 'what would a holistic paradigm of listening include?'. Her answer to the latter question, typically embracing, is, 'in short, everything.' (ibid.).

Lipari and Corradi Fiumara both gave me confidence in pursuing listening as a discrete subject of inquiry. Their broad and holistic understanding of listening, and their strong ethical standpoint, gave me the strength to maintain my own listening to listening, rather than to sound.

5.1 Cultures Of Listening: Ways Of Hearing, Ways Of Listening

I also maintain throughout this study the position that listening is an activity of culture. It is theory and practice that has emerged from specific historical and social contexts. This is an implicit given throughout this thesis. I do not attempt a monolithic definition of listening, nor discredit any of the modes and strategies that I discuss. Much of what I write about listening will be operating more at a level of ethnography than philosophy. That is, I am writing about lots of other people's ideas about listening and seeking to explore and understand them - in this case, many of these 'others' are working within sound art. I am approaching listening as a cultured phenomenon. As we will discover, even within the niche field of sound art (and I mean niche in relation to all the listenings that are discussed or enacted across the world every day), there are many perspectives of what listening is, or what it should be. The position of the listening artist is not one to be universalised or made definitive. It is contingent on society, identity, discourse and situation.

To expound on this I offer the following propositions: To speak of ways of hearing demands an analysis of culture - of cultural representations of aural encounters - and to speak of ways of listening demands a study of behaviour and techniques - of modes and strategies that are accounted for by the term 'listening'.

5.2 Ways Of Hearing

In musical terms, an ear cultured in Western art music will find pleasure in Bach whereas an ear cultured in dubstep will find the same in the music of Cooly G, and vice versa. These various satisfactions are the results of different ways of hearing. To my white, Western ear, the intervals-within-intervals of Chinese opera can sound wholly unmusical, even out of tune, and they did when I first heard them (I have since developed an appreciation of it). But to the aficionado such intervals are absolutely the norm, and capable of sublime beauty. In the production of music a certain record producer will have the ability to draw out different qualities in the sounds she is using. She may become known for a certain sound, born out a certain way of hearing. The vocal sound may be recognizable, the mix idiosyncratic to that producer. A phonographer's recordings may be recognizably their work, due to a consistency of subject or form in their recordings. We might start to speak of that phonographer's way of hearing, with her catalogue becoming an earpiece onto her hearing of the world.

These examples are musical or connected to musical listening - but we can also find examples in dialogue, conversation and more inter-personal listenings. Indeed, such cultured ways of hearing have wide-reaching and politically significant consequences as illustrated in activist and sound theorist Christie Zwahlen's discussion of the Trayvon Martin case of 2013 (Zwahlen, 2015). Martin was a teenager killed by security guard George Zimmerman, who was then acquited of his murder, a situation that sparked huge debates and protests regarding race and injustice in the USA. The failure of the prosecution to secure a murder conviction was partly blamed on the testimony of witness Rachel Jeantel. Zwahlen argues that it was 'Jeantel's voice and use of African American Vernacular English' (ibid.) that many commentators drew attention to and criticised. Such critics *heard* Jeantel's voice as 'untrustworthy and unintelligible' (ibid.) and, due to the bias within their way of hearing her voice failed to actually listen to her evidence and her testimony was rejected. In this case a culturally transmitted and prejudicial way of hearing a black voice resulted in a very particular understanding of that voice, one that did not hear the intention and meaning in and of her words but instead heard just a racial

stereotype. All those critics lacked adequate strategies to listen beyond their particular way of hearing.

5.3 Ways Of Listening

In contrast to ways of hearing, I suggest that ways of listening are often prescriptive and offer strategies and techniques. They give us strategies of entry to new zones of understanding, to new ways of hearing that may otherwise be faraway lands: they offer means to experience the Other. Ways of listening can be strategies, manifestos, or techniques. They are often learnt or culturally specific (see Johnson, 1996). If you go to a concert at Cafe Oto, if you watch a counselor mid-consultation, if you see the face of a parent listening to their child, if you watch your friend listening to music on headphones: each situation demands a different listening. Such 'techniques of listening'[3], according to Jonathan Sterne, invariably encompass physical actions and, as he notes, 'technique connotes practice, virtuosity, the possibilities of failure and accident…It is a learned skill, a set of repeatable activities within a limited number of framed contexts' (Sterne, 2003, p. 92).

The range of 'framed contexts' is broad, from listening to music to listening within a therapeutic context to listening amongst friends in a bar. These ways of listening can become powerful forces of communality, binding a group together, even in the face of adversity and danger, a situation described by Sam Halliday in his book *Sonic Modernity: Representing Sound in Literature* (2013):

> One day…in the middle of the minuet there was a tremendous explosion. A delayed action bomb had gone off in Trafalgar Square. In the trio of the minuet which they were playing, the musicians did not lift their bows from their strings. A few of the audience, who had been listening with heads bowed, straightened themselves for an instant and then resumed their posture. (p.157)

Here a cultured listening withstands the disruption of an air raid, with its shared strategies allowing audience and player alike to maintain focus on the music, and to ignore the booming at the boundaries of their aural and physical space. Moreover, such a strategy,

[3] The phrase 'techniques of listening' is derived by Sterne from Marcel Mauss' writing on techniques of the body in his essay of the same name (Mauss, 1935/2006, pp.77-97).

learned through years of musical appreciation, creates a way of hearing the world (when listening to music) that easily excludes intervention and disturbance.

6. Conclusion

So, this study begins with the listening of the sound artist and ends with the listening of the listening artist. I suggest that sound art has a tendency to approach listening in an atomist manner, with specific strategies of listening that are, mostly, designed for an individual listener in 'particular framed contexts' which can elude more than empower when applied in other contexts. As my research continued I became less concerned with these ways of listening and I began to study a more holistic listening that recognized multiple subjectivities and allowed space for broader issues of politics, gender, identity and culture to be heard in and through an artistic practice of listening. The position of the listening artist is concerned with making spaces through their own listening where this polyvocality can occur. It is this dialogic and space-making listening that I claim is the main practical and theoretical ground for the position of the listening artist.

Figure 2: Scott, D. (2017) *A Space Made By Listening #1*

CHAPTER ONE

The Canon: Modes And Strategies Of Listening Within Sound Art

1.1 Overview

The following two chapters present the first part of my research, conducted between 2012 and 2014. The research began with a scoping out of the dominant ways of listening present in sound art praxis, and explored their relevance, usefulness and limitations with regards two projects: a series of works called Open Studio, developed with Tate Modern's Families team (Scott, 2012a-f), and a seminar entitled *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener?* (Scott, 2014a) that took place at the London College of Communication in the summer of 2014. The two chapters discuss a canon of listening within sound art and reveal how the early part of my research uncovered a gap in accounting for my listening that both limited what I sought to explore in my practice, and also disallowed a broader understanding of the listening at play in the work. I realised that my listening praxis needed to encompass accounts of listening beyond those offered by sound art's canon of listening. I explore this 'listening beyond sound art' in more depth in Chapters Three and Four. This line of enquiry ultimately led me to the proposition that there the is position of the listening artist, one that operates against and beyond sound art, and I will present this in depth in Chapter Five.

1.2 A Canon Of Listening In Sound Art

The initial part of my research was concerned with the existing ways of listening that seemed to dominate discourses of listening within sound art. The canonical nature of these ways of listening was indicated by their concurrent presence (in varying forms, but with many common names) in three keystone sound art texts of the mid to late 2000s: *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* (2004), edited by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner, *Sound* (2011), edited by Caleb Kelly, and *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (2004), by Brandon LaBelle.

Audio Culture devotes a third of its 'theories' section, itself half of the book, to 'modes of listening' (p.87). The introductory text, written by Cox and Warner, notes how

'contemporary musical practices and technologies have problematised [the] traditional mode of auditory apprehension and have necessitated a new discourse around listening' (ibid.). Cox and Warner argue that 'the advent of recording and broadcasting forever altered the experience of listening and drew attention to the act of listening itself' (ibid.). The detachment of sound from source afforded by these technologies, 'made possible at least two new modes of listening' (ibid.), namely Pierre Schaeffer's acousmatic listening, where sound is listened to without any visual referent to a source, and what Cox and Warner call 'ambient' listening: a listening occurring at the edge of consciousness, a mode developed by Brian Eno and outlined in a text by Eno included in the 'modes of listening' section (pp.94-97).

Audio Culture opened up much-needed critical space around listening by laying-out and critically engaging with these 'new modes of listening'. The book includes articles on profound listening, deep listening, reduced listening and adequate listening, and name-checks a range of practitioners including Otomo Yoshihide, Pauline Oliveros and Alvin Lucier. However, the text is limiting in how it suggests listening is primarily a phenomenological issue. In relation to the 'new modes' outlined above they note how 'contemporary music reflects these phenomenological changes and continues to work through the problems and possibilities inherent in these new modes of listening.' (p.68)[4] . I suggest approaching Schaeffer's reduced listening, or the other listenings discussed, as only 'phenomenological changes' ignores other political, gender and sociological dynamics at play, aspects of listening that are not referenced in the book[5]. As we will discuss in Chapter Two phenomenology, whilst useful in certain contexts, overlooks the many social, political and identity political aspects of listening.

Where Cox and Warner's 'modes of listening' offer up techniques and meditations on listening itself, Caleb Kelly's section on listening in his book *Sound* (2011) proposes listening

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4 Cox and Warner here use the phrase 'contemporary music', but the examples they explore would readily be accepted as sound art as much as music (Lopez, Oliveros et al).

5 At the time of writing (August, 2017) I note that a revised edition of the text was published in July, 2017 which extends this section on listening to include examples of a 'politics of listening' (Cox and Warner, 2017), including the work of Laurence Abu Hamdan and the work of Ultra-Red, who I will discuss in more depth in Chapter Three and Chapter Five. This expansion of the section reflects a broader approach to listening across sound art praxis in the last few years, one I will explore more in Chapter Three.

as a means of approaching sound within contemporary art noting that 'once we begin to listen we find that contemporary art is a rather rowdy area of practice' (p.13). Kelly's introduction notes the problematic relationship between visual arts critique and sound, arguing that 'critics from visual arts often have trouble describing sound: their lexicon does not include an ongoing dialogue with audio concepts.' (ibid.). A section entitled 'The Listener and Acoustic Space' (pp.110-146) includes articles that explore the listener as a body in space, or as a component of space. The section includes, amongst others, Bernhard Leitner's discussion of architecture's neglect of sound in space and Emily Thompson's expansion of R Murray Schafer's notion of the soundscape via a discussion of modernity's creation of new approaches to sound in space[6] and subsequent 'new trends in the culture of listening' (p.18)).

Whilst Kelly's book offers a valuable and useful resource for understanding what he calls 'the sonic turn that is transforming the practice of numerous artists around the world' (p.13), this section on listening only hints at the possibility of a far less audible listening turn in much sounding (as well as silent) art practice. Ultimately its primarily concerned with listening *to* art rather than listening *as* art. To an extent, Kelly's selections maintain a position that 'under-hears' listening and privileges sound. In this regard, *Sound* reflects Fiumara's critique that listening is too easily relegated to a hazy and secondary position to discourse, or, in this case, sound.

Brandon LaBelle's *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (2006) engages with listening more directly in a number of novel and revealing ways. LaBelle attempts to open up listening beyond phenomenological accounts and goes some way to embracing a more contextual and social model of listening, appreciating its role not only as a perceptual

6 It is worth noting how Kelly's text, published only eight years after Cox and Warner's, extends an artistic appreciation of listening beyond the listening of musicians and artists and encompasses architecture and geography. Kelly's inclusion of the excerpt from Emily Thompson's *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933* (2004) is indicative of how sound art's discourse began to be influenced by the growing field of Sound studies, an area that grew significantly in prominence during the 2000s with publication of key texts such as Jonathan Sterne's *The Audible Past* (2003) and Thompson's book. Sound studies is now a close ally of sound art in its interrogation of sound practices, including, but not limited to sound art itself.

encounter between individual and sound but also as a crucial dynamic in connecting people to *each other*. In his analysis of John Cage's *Silent Prayer* LaBelle notes that Cage's philosophy of listening 'is an attempt to recover neglected and perhaps deeper roots of what we call "music", for listening may gather in the total situation of not only sound but its context, synthesising all this into an aesthetic project' (p.34). Labelle proposes his own modes such as 'active listening' which re-situates the individual, away from alienation and the mechanisms 'that divide and extinguish', and towards an 'integrating and letting live' (ibid.). The latter notions echo Lipari's holistic listening, and Corradi Fiumara's description, after Heidegger, of listening being a 'letting-lie-together-before'.

LaBelle's reflections on listening in *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* are further developed in his article 'On Listening' (2012), a short survey of listening within sound art which echoes Cox and Warner's selections by drawing together Oliveros, Cage, Schafer and Chion via discussion of Jean Luc Nancy's book *Listening* (which we will discuss later on p.35). Labelle explains that 'it is [his] intention to…give detail to an acoustical paradigm in which listening is an active coordinate, if not its main generative figure' (ibid.), a proposal that not only foregrounds listening in a discussion of sound art but also suggests that listening is the forebearer of sound. The latter is a bold position, one that I discuss in Chapter Two (p. 65) within the context of Salomé Voegelin's work.

Amongst artists the notion of a listening canon has most been most explicitly proposed by the sound art collective Ultra-Red, who write in their introduction to the pamphlet *Five Protocols for Organized Listening* (2012):

> Recalling the canonical listening experiments of modernism by John Cage, Cornelius Cardew, Pauline Oliveros, Pierre Schafer, R Murray Schafer, Hildegard Westerkamp, and many others, each had its own protocols. Experimental scores, chance operations, event-scores, and instructions organised the various listening procedures. As conceptualised by the modernist avant-garde, protocols for listening give priority to transforming auditory perceptions. (p.2)

We find here a clear articulation of the diversity of listening practices in sound art, but also of their competing ambitions on how they wish audiences to experience and understand sound. We will return to Ultra-Red in Chapter Three.

1.2.1 Modes And Strategies Of Listening

In the years before and since LaBelle's 'On Listening', Cox and Warner's *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* and Kelly's *Sound* a raft of further approaches can be found in the literature, many of which we will discuss later, with some making universal claims about the nature of listening and others being more concerned with particular situations or acoustic spaces. These include:

> Reduced listening (Schaeffer, 1967), deep listening (Oliveros, 2005), profound listening (Lopez in Cox and Warner, 2004), body listening (Leitner, 2008), gestalt listening (Cahen, 2011), ambient listening (Eno, 1978), acousmatic listening (Schaeffer, 1967), structural listening (Adorno, 1962/1982), adequate listening, (Stockfelt in Cox and Warner, 2004) collective listening, (LaBelle, 2006), spatial listening (Leitner, 1970), imaginative listening (Ihde, 1976), absent-minded listening (Yoshihide in Cox and Warner, 2004), affective listening (Wang Jing, 2012), improvised listening (Ultra-Red, 2012), background listening (Truax), schizophonic listening (Murray Schafer, 1977) causal listening (Chion, 1994).

In 2012 I began 'collecting' all the listenings proposed within the discipline[7]. There was a plethora to absorb, some proposed by artists themselves to account for their practice, others suggested as means by which to understand existing works.

I quickly recognised that there was a risk of slippage present between a study of how we listen, and a proposal for how we should (or could) listen. I decided that within the multiple ways of listening within my collection there were two, not entirely discrete but still discernible approaches to describing listening: one being the listening strategy and the other the listening mode. Both notions, the mode and the strategy, constitute the 'ways of listening' outlined in the introduction, distinct from ways of hearing. Modes and strategies are ways of engaging with the world, which may then lead to a particular way of hearing the world.

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[7] See USB file '1 An Emergent Glossary (Unfinished)' for the beginnings of a glossary of these listenings. I later abandoned this project due to the divergent trajectory my research took during 2014.

According to their Oxford English Dictionary definitions, a strategy is 'a plan of action or policy designed to achieve a major or overall aim' whereas a mode describes 'a way or manner in which something occurs or is experienced, expressed, or done'. Hence, grammatically, a mode is described in the passive voice, 'a mode is experienced, expressed or done', with an unnamed actor acting on it from outside, whereas a strategy is active, it is the active agent. The former reflects practitioners' and theorists' notions of a tacit, stative form of listening, and the latter refers to specific and active strategies aimed at shifting attention in a specific direction. A strategy suggested an instructive component, and is connected to a relatively long-tradition of listening pedagogy that reaches back to works such as Joseph Kreibahl's *The Art of Listening to Music* (1904), published in the early twentieth century for discerning music lovers in which Krehbiel dreams of 'a numerous company of writers and talkers who shall teach the people how to listen to music so that it shall not pass through their heads like a vast tonal phantasmagoria, but provide the varied and noble delights contemplated by the composers' (p.13).

I accepted that this bipartite split was a stark distinction, and it was possible, for example, to take the notion of causal listening - a mode discussed by Michel Chion (1994, p.25) denoting a listening that seeks a source for a sound, something he argues occurs unconsciously - and turn it into a conscious strategy. Nuances aside, I could place many of the canonical approaches to listening into one or other of these categories:

Modes

Adequate (Stockfelt)
Collective (LaBelle)
Casual (Chion)
Semantic (Chion)
Listening-in-readiness (Truax)
Background (Truax)
Imaginative (Ihde)
Acousmatic (Schaeffer)
Schizophonic (Schafer)

Strategies

Absent-Minded (Yoshihide)
Reduced (Schaeffer/Chion)
Ambient (Eno)

Disinterested (Cage)
Deep (Oliveros)
Affective (Jing)
Structural (Adorno)
Profound (Lopez)
Soundscape (Schafer, Westerkamp)
Body (Leitner)

These modes and strategies act as normative frameworks, directing listening in particular ways, often towards the understanding (the hearing) of sound that the artist or theorist wished to convey.

What perhaps connects these listenings is that all the practitioners and theorists who propose them are *reflexive* listeners. All sound artists employ listening in their work, but not all foreground listening as a subject of their practice. For the reflexive listener, listening becomes not only a mode of working but also a subject of inquiry. These artists operate within a feedback loop of listening, reflecting on listening, and listening again. As I will discuss in a moment, I saw my own practice within these terms.

I will return to a number of these listenings in the course of this chapter and the next. The list is not exhaustive: as Barry Truax wryly noted when discussing all the theories of listening within sound art during a talk at the Symposium on Acoustic Ecology, 'there are as many ways of listening as there are listeners' (2013).

1.2.2 Other Listenings

That listening can be 'taught' or could be reduced to discrete modes and strategies is not without controversy. Listening can also be proposed as less a civic, or aesthetic, *skill* and more a question of personal, individual *desire*. Composer and sound theorist Daphne Oram noted in 1972 in her book *An Individual Note:*

> I am often asked, when I give lectures, whether I can give some guidance to listeners, that I felt it would be worth writing a book inviting the would-be listener to muse upon the subjects of music, sound and electronics. But no, I can give no actual advice for appreciating music as it is one of those wonderfully personal affairs ... no one should intrude, let alone tell you how to do it! (Oram, 1972/2017,

p.55)

This emergence of a private and personal listening, perhaps due to the explosion of sound reproduction technologies in the twentieth century and the resultant individualisation of listening through mediums such as the home stereo or the iPod (see Bull 2007 for a perspective on these issues), has foregrounded a more subjective, self-absorbed aspect to listening. But there remains some mystery in how this listening is engaged. In *Bubbles: Spheres: Microsphereology* (2008), philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, in a chapter exploring the myth of the Sirens, discusses such 'intimate' listening and argues that:

> From a psychoacoustic perspective, the shift to intimate listening is always connected to a change of attitude from a one-dimensional alarm- and distance-oriented listened to a polymorphously moved floating listening. This change reverses the general tendency to move from a magical, proto-musical listening to one revolving round alarm and concern - or, to put it in more enlightened terms: from uncritical participation to critical awareness. (Sloterdijk, 2008, p480)

Yet Sloterdijk recognizes the mystery of how this listening both engenders and then arrests our attention. He raises the question in florid terms:

> How can it be that for billions of messages, I am a rock on which their waves break without resonance, while certain voices and instructions unlock me and tremble me as if I were the chosen instrument to render them audible, a medium and mouthpiece simple for their urge to sound?
> (Sloterdijk, 2008, p.479)

This arresting of listening, where the sound itself demands a particular mode or strategy of its listener, remains an enigmatic process for Sloterdijk. What makes us listen to one sound and completely ignore another? He offers no easy answer to this. I suggest this is not an entirely mystical process. As noted in the case of Rachel Jeantel, sometimes a person's failure to listen is due to their own histories and experiences of sound, histories and experiences that are rooted in prosaic conditions of gender, race, class and education. These are conditions that mould a person's way of hearing the world, and therefore determine what they listen to (through a mode or strategy), how they listen, and what they hear and understand of that sound.

Returning to notions that propose a more ambiguous and fluctuating form of listening, Jean Luc Nancy's *Listening* is a text I kept close at hand during this early part of my research. Nancy discerns listening from the 'hearing' of what he calls the 'philosopher's ear', that is, the hearing that denotes understanding (2007, p.3). Nancy highlights the different modes apparent in the vocabulary describing our sensory register where, in the French, the verb 'to hear' can be translated as both entendre and comprendre; the former referring to the passive, physiological sensation of sound ('its simple nature' (p.5)), the latter to an understanding, or a recognition of meaning, (the 'philosopher's ear'). Between the two we find listening: '(the sonorous register's) tense, attentive, or anxious state…' (ibid.) For Nancy 'to listen is to stretch the ear…it is an intensification, and a concern, a curiosity or an anxiety' (ibid.). The distinction is crucial and is expounded on by Nancy where 'in all saying (in the whole chain of meaning) there is hearing, and in hearing itself, at the very bottom of it, a listening. To listen is to strain toward a possible meaning, consequently one that is not immediately accessible' (p.6). For Nancy, listening is not concerned with meaning *per se*, and, indeed, once meaning and understanding are granted listening necessarily ceases. His listening-without-meaning echoes two listening strategies we will explore later: Otomo Yoshihide's 'absent-minded listening' and Salomé Voegelin's 'innovative' listening, strategies that seek to hold the listening in a meaning-*less* space where sound can be encountered (somehow) without recourse to convention, association or semantics.

Nancy's listening presents a more contingent and fluid model of listening than the notion of modes and strategies (and their attendant techniques) might suggest. For Nancy listening is apart from hearing and understanding and is a space with its own ontology which requires novel philosophical approaches.

1.3 The Problem Of How We (Should) Listen To Sound Art

Composer Katherine Norman has described the listening the artist wishes to engender in their audience as 'composer-led listening' (1996, p.11). When activated by a piece of music or composed sound, Norman proposes that such a listening is concerned with seeking and following an 'abstract musical discourse' (ibid.). An audience versed in popular and classical Western music is quite willing and able to follow a composer-led listening when listening to such music due to their various degrees of musical education and wider cultural immersion in music discourse and practice. Indeed, for some steeped in conventional musical knowledge, composer-led listening can completely 'arrest' the

sensory faculties and prevent any other sensory engagement, as the following anecdote from musicologist Franco Fabbri suggests:

> I heard of musicians (or, anyway, 'musical' people) who could 'do it' with many kinds of music, but definitely not with others: I found it fascinating that amongst the latter, along with examples I also could suspect (like Webern's String Trio, just to mention it again), someone included 'anything by Johann Sebastian Bach', commenting that his/her mind was captured by the logic of contrapuntal development in a way that he/she couldn't care for anything else. (Fabbri, 2003, p.14)

Here a trained musician is so attuned to the listening required by Bach's music that upon hearing it their listening overtakes all other cognitive and bodily functioning, so preventing sexual congress. Their listening was entirely arrested, then led by the intentions of the composer. As a counterpoint to composer-led listening Norman proposes 'self-intended listening' (1996, p.12) as the listening that we indulge for the majority of our listening time, where we choose to listen to our friend's voice, or the rolling of waves, or the radio. This listening is not framed or conducted by an external force. Norman notes, as we sit on a beach, reveling in our sonic environment, no person 'tells' us that we might listen to the 'song' of the sea'' (ibid.)[8].

However, I suggest some sound art presents difficulties for the listener and disallows this easy seduction into a 'composer-led listening' as it explores sounds that are non-musical so resulting in an audience failing to listen 'correctly' to the work. Moreover, when confronted with sounds normally heard in 'self-led listening moments' but in a composer-led environment like a sound art work, they may resist or simply impress their own motivations onto the sound, in the process failing to 'hear' the artist's intention.

The listening demanded by some sound art is not always obvious, or easy to engage with. As an example, writing on the minimalist Onkyō music scene based at Tokyo's Off Site venue, critic Clive Bell remarks:

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8 Although I would suggest 'the song of the sea' is still somewhat 'composer-led' as the notion is more derived from romantic poetry as any *a priori* tendency to just sit and listen to water.

> When you are present at an Off Site concert, this intense listening is highly noticeable. The music is, let's face it, hardly a picnic for the audience. Sitting on small stools on a concrete floor, they listen like they mean it. (cited in Lourde, 2008, p.270).

This difficulty is partly due to sound art's constant exploration of novel sounds, novel listening situations and novel modes of presentation, which all constitute a form of sonic avant-garde, all of which are challenges rather than balms to the listening audience. Moreover, the artist, having pushed their own listening into broad and diverse terrains during the creation of the work, is then demanding this listening of an unprepared audience. This requires radically new approaches to listening, a situation celebrated by Theodor Adorno in his work *The Sociology of Music* (1962/1988) as a means of resistance to dominant bourgeois modes of sounding and listening and noted by Lorraine Plourde in her study of the Onkyō music scene (2008): 'For Adorno, the musical avant-garde was synonymous with the designation of "new music"' (p.284), forms that demanded new modes of listening to cope with the 'shock of its strangeness and enigmatic form' (ibid.). Adorno's prized mode of listening, structural listening, was one of a hierarchy Adorno proposed to describe various approaches to music (Adorno 1962/1988, p.7), with the lowliest being what he described as regressive listening - a listening that was slavish to popular music trends and listened only for sentiment. For Adorno, the highest form of musical listening was structural listening, which focused on the internal logic of musical composition, divorced from fashion or emotion. The worthiest subject, according to Adorno, of his structural listening was the new serialist music emerging from Vienna in the first half of the twentieth century, exemplified in the work of Schoenberg and Webern. For Adorno, structural listening was part in a broader avant-garde, Marxism-informed mission to resist the growing hegemony of capitalism. Judith Peraino, in her book *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of Queer Identity from Homer to Hedwig*, notes how, for Adorno, '[d]ifficult music requires intellectual work by the listener, and that the effort of that work brings the estrangement between music and its auditor that is needed to counter complacency and alienation from ideological superstructures' (Peraino, 2005, p2).

Structural listening has remained influential within music pedagogy. As Andrew Dell' Antonio notes in his introduction to *Beyond Structural Listening? Post-modern Modes of Hearing* (2004) structural listening is 'a discipline commonplace in the academic study of Western art music, and a pedagogical staple of undergraduate education in music history and theory' (p.1). Structural listening's influence in music theory has mostly been in its

rigorous approach to the music itself, focusing on its unfolding logic and to its aesthetic properties. Adorno's ethical or political concerns are not always foregrounded in subsequent applications of his ideas, although there is a subtext to much musical theory that means of engaging with music other than through a strict, score-based, reading are somehow deficient or vulgar - a tendency referenced in by Franco Fabbri in his essay 'Taboo Listening' (2003): 'Serious professors, asked to comment on the matter [of listening properly to music], were heard saying: "Once music was art, one would go to a concert and listen. Now we have all this bad music coming out of loudspeakers. See all those young people with their Walkmans."' (p.2).

Figure 3: Bell, C. (2003) *Photo Of Taku Sugimoto & Otomo Yoshihide In Off Site*

So, *pace* Adorno, an avant-garde sound maker proposes not only a new and shocking sound but also infers an equally new and challenging form of listening. The Onkyō scene was defined by its extremely quiet and demanding music. Plourde notes how some audience members were left completely confused by the sounds they were hearing, one stating, 'when I first went to Off Site I was bored. There's very little change or development in the music, which would be okay, except the sound wasn't good either.'

(Plourde, 2008, p.285). But gradually, after listening more, through reading the blog posts of leading Onkyō performer Otomo Yoshihide, and talking with other audience members, they slowly learned how to listen to the sounds:

> Then I saw Otomo's homepage where he wrote about Onkyō and listening in various essays, and I read those and thought, 'Ah, so that's what it's all about' [laughs]. And I realised that I could now understand it in this way. (ibid.)

Here we find an example of a difficult listening experience moving, via a self-led listening, to a form of composer-led listening: a listening that succeeds in hearing that which the composer intended. Indeed, Yoshihide was quite explicit regarding the correct strategy of listening required for Onkyō: he called it 'absent-minded listening'. It was a strategy that required a mindfulness to not jump to meaning or source. He noted, 'it could be said that the moment one recognizes a certain sound in terms of meaning, one stops hearing the sound as sound' (cited in Cox and Warner, 2004, p.85). The latter position, that sound can be appreciated as a thing in itself apart from its source or its semiotic meaning, has a long lineage within sound art, as we will discuss below in relation to Pierre Schaeffer.

1.3.1 'A Listening Listened To'

Teaching an audience how to listen is not always easy. Peter Szendy's book *Listen: A History of our Ears* (2008) and Pierre Schaeffer's *In Search of Concrete Music* (1952/2012) both highlight the problems inherent in seeking ways and means of engendering a 'correct' listening in a subject, via the encouragement of a certain strategy, or the engendering of a particular mode. Peter Szendy describes a listening situation where the protagonist plays a favourite piece of music to a friend in an attempt to share a particular experience of sound. The situation is analogous to that of the artist attempting to transfer their own listening on her audience:

> For what I wanted to hear you listening to - yes: to hear you listening to! - was my listening. Perhaps an impossible wish - the impossible itself…Can one make a listening listened to? Can I transmit my listening, unique as it is? That seems so improbable, and yet so desirable, so necessary too (2008, p.5).

Indeed, Szendy extends his meditations to the artist, speculating that 'a pianist, a composer, in short a musician who, unlike me, is not content with playing words or his

record player also wishes, above all else, to make a listening listened to. His listening.' (pp.5-6). This challenge – 'to make a listening listened to' - has been addressed by many sound artists throughout the past century, and is the root desire - to 'transmit their listening' - behind many of the strategies of listening that emerged during that period. Pierre Schaeffer encountered exactly the same difficulties as Szendy (how to transmit his listening to another), back in 1952, here discussing his own listening to his field recordings:

> As soon as a record is put on the turntable a magic power enchains me, forces me to submit to it, however, monotonous it is. Do we give ourselves over because we are in the on the act? Why shouldn't they broadcast three minutes of 'pure coach' telling people that they need only to know how to listen, that the whole art is in the hearing? Because they are extraordinary to listen to, provided you have reached that special state of mind I'm now in. (Schaeffer, 1952/2012, p.12)

The whole art is in the hearing: for Schaeffer, a 'pure coach' for the unassuming radio listener (a kind of listening-warm-up) was a solution to the problem of how to transmit his listening to his audience, and he spent many years developing his strategy of reduced listening to this end.

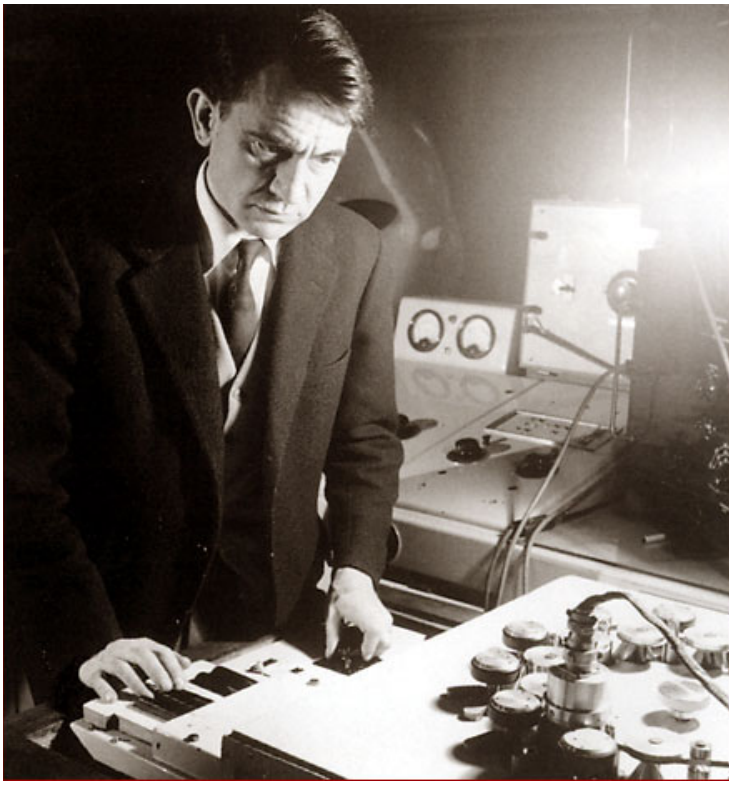

Figure 4: Lido, S. (1948) *Pierre Schaeffer*

So, beneath the sound that sound art generates is a rich seam of listenings. Of all the arts, it has arguably been sound art that has *thought through* listening the most, both in its process of making work and in its theoretical discourse. And it is in the ambiguous spaces between sound, music and art that practitioners have most deeply questioned the nature of listening, interrogating the hegemonic presence of convention and tradition and generating new ways to listen and hear. I've only touched on some of the modes and strategies that have proposed over the past century[9], mainly for reasons of brevity, and another study could concern itself with more thoroughly cataloguing and tracing their trajectories through the discipline. Indeed, when I began this study that was *my* intention, but as I moved through the first stages of my research I quickly realized that this was not to be my mission. My practice led me somewhere else, as we will discuss in the next chapter.

1.4 Listening In My Practice

When I began this PhD I was both inspired and perplexed by the claims of these discourses around listening. Indeed, as mentioned above, to understand this diversity of listenings, and ascertain their usefulness to a practitioner, was my initial motivation for undertaking this research.

I always had a listening praxis, I maintained a dialectic between theory and making. I was listening and listening in all manner of ways. It seemed evident to me that, as stated by Charles Morrison in his essay 'Musical Listening and the Fine Art of Engagement' (Morrison, 2007), listeners *move between* different modes of engagement when listening: that is, 'active, operational means by which listeners experience music and that listening experiences more often than not involve multiple interacting modes rather than a fixed mode throughout' (p.403). Yet I also felt that some of these modes or strategies were more relevant or useful than others. I wondered how my own listening practices actually corresponded with or reflected the claims of the discourse around listening within the discipline. Moreover, I often found myself pulling myself up about my listening: Why wasn't I engaged more rigorously in reduced listening, or deep listening? Could I be an affective listener as well as a semantic listener? If not, then what kind listener was I? Was

[9] See also Russolo's figure of the aural *flaneur* in Art of Noises, Cage's *4'33"* and Barry Truax's discussion of listening in *Acoustic Communication* (2000) as further examples.

I simply not listening hard enough?

I felt that often my listening was tactical, I was not slavish to a particular strategy, nor could I sense a single modality at work. Often, I was just muddling through. Moreover, since so much of my listening was as much to do with talking, with people and communication as it was with the materiality of sound, how should I understand this? I found consolation in the following reflection by record producer Robert Davis, writing on modes of listening in the context of his work in music production. He states, 'When I read this type of writing, I wonder if Adorno, Levinson, Gurney, and the countless other philosophers of listening shared the same faculty for listening that I have. I have to confess that the promotion of these hierarchical listening positions confused me for many years as they are not the way I listen to music' (Davis, 2011).

The self-doubt expressed by the latter proposition, one that I felt great sympathy with, alerted me to the seemingly prescriptive (and ultimately normative) aspect of a listening praxis informed by theories of modes and strategies of listening. Many of them implicitly suggested that we currently didn't listen 'correctly' and that such practices would make us 'better' listeners. I had some experience of that sensation of lack. For some time I felt that my listening was 'failed', it was not up to scratch. This grated me[10]. It seemed self-evident that we were listening everyday, sound artists and non-sound artists alike, and this listening was nuanced and considered. Yet, the notion of ways of listening that could be learnt or practised brought with it the implicit suggestion that there were 'expert' listeners out there, who listened 'better' than the rest. I critiqued this notion in a work entitled *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener?* which I will discuss at the end of the next chapter (p. 76). This work, which I described as a performative dialogue, operated as a means of scrutinising with peers the ideas presented in this chapter and also as the precursor for where my praxis lead in the second half of my research.

1.4.1 Conclusion

In 2012 my key ambition was to scope out these ways of listening and ascertain their usefulness within my practice and the practice of other sound artists. But, rather quickly, I began to suspect there was a gap in sound art's accounts and practices of listening. This

[10] I wrote a short text about this called 'Failed Listening' which we will discuss in more depth during the next chapter (p.79).

was concurrent with the development of my practice into realms outside of sound art, but in which listening was still a central methodological and conceptual concern.

I will tell the story of this realization through exploring and analysing a year-long project I conducted with Tate Learning over the course of 2012. The work operated as a practice-led case study of my listening, and for the efficacy of the collection of listening outlined above. It constitutes evidence of my reflexive listening practice, and offers an account both of my listening, and the broader implications of the collection of listening outlined above on contemporary sound practice. But it also plots a failure. I end with the realisation that the canon I have discussed above was not sufficient to account for the listening in my work and I had to look elsewhere.

Whilst seeming logical when applied to musical works with clearly framed contexts for listening, these notions of correct listening, 'self-directed' listening, or those with a phenomenological approach (a notion I will explore in more depth in Chapter Two), seemed reductive when applied to the more messy and inter-subjective realities of the art practice I was engaged in. Sound art's canonical listenings were concerned with particular contexts of listening, mainly occuring within a musical paradigm. The listening was of the audience to the artist, or sometimes of the artist to their material: the signal chain moving from sound to listener in an uncomplicated relay. My practice, whilst working in sound and listening, increasingly seemed to have concerns that lay outside of these canonical modes and strategies of listening.

Moreover, I supposed that there may be other accounts of listening that were not present in the canon of listenings within sound art. The main reason for their absence in sound art discourse was that these other accounts of listening were dealing with situations that weren't relevant to the discipline's aesthetic, political or philosophical concerns. The problem was not sound art's, more that there were *other* artistic practices of listening I needed to uncover that weren't concerned with the issues discussed in this chapter.

So, as mentioned in the introduction, it may seem like a diversion, but it is necessary to go on this journey within this thesis, to understand how I discovered the limits of the canonical listenings within sound art, and how these limits evidence the existence of another practice of listening beyond sound art.

Figure 5: Scott, D. (2017) *A Space Made By Listening #3*

CHAPTER TWO
The Limits Of Listening: The Canon Of Listening In Practice

2.1 Overview: A Listening Practice: Open Studio At Tate Modern

After the initial scoping out of the canon of listening within sound art, I was keen to explore the efficacy and relevance of these modes and strategies to my own practice. As discussed in the previous chapter, I was always a reflexive listener when developing work, and my initial intention with this PhD research was to deepen and develop this reflexivity and offer insights and practical advice to the wider sound art community on using different strategies of listening. At this stage in my research, I saw this as my original contribution to knowledge - to offer a comprehensive collection of listening, drawn from various strands of existing sound art praxis, that practitioners could use to develop, critique and interpret existing or new sound art. Yet, as noted in the previous chapter, this focus altered over the course of 2012 and 2013, and this chapter navigates that shift: it begins with my own fidelity to and faith in sound art's canon of listening, and ends in dissatisfaction and the realisation that I found many gaps and deficits in this canon, partly because of the nature of my work, and partly because of the particular aesthetic, political and philosophical concerns of sound art as a discipline.

In 2012 an opportunity arose to explore sound art's canon of listening, and the notion of modes and strategies, through a series of works I undertook for the Tate Modern Families programme (part of Tate Learning) as a consultant artist for a project called Open Studio. The project was initiated by Head of Families, Susan Sheddan, and developed by her team from 2011 onwards, concluding in late 2012. I was invited to be part of a working group with Susan, as well as the artists Louisa Martin and Melanie Stidolph, to trial ideas and build a conceptual framework around the project. Susan was keen that I develop ideas derived from my practice as a sound artist and my PhD research into listening.

2.2 Open Studio

Open Studio is an artist-devised space in Tate Modern that offers families visiting the gallery an opportunity to interact, make, and experiment with materials, techniques and other aspects of artistic process. Open Studio was perhaps best understood as a piece of participatory art where the artist sets up the conditions of the work and these play out according to the interventions of visitors. In an evaluation document written at the end of 2012, I used the metaphor of the jigsaw to describe the dynamics at play within the project.

> In the introduction to his novel, *Life A User's Manual*, George Perec eulogises the designer of jigsaws. The jigsaw is a game for two players, he claims; one is the jigsaw maker, the other jigsaw puzzler:
>
> 'Puzzling is not a solitary game: every move the puzzler makes, the puzzle-maker has made before, every piece the puzzler picks up, and picks up again, and studies and strokes, every combination he tries, and tries a second time, every blunder and insight, each hope and each discouragement have all been designed, calculated, and decided by the other.'
>
> …
>
> The jigsaw puzzle is initially a straightforward activity, the rules are clear, the component parts easy to manipulate: anyone can start playing with a jigsaw puzzle. The more selective and serious jigsaw puzzler begins with a handicap that most occasional puzzlers would never allow: they begin without knowing what image the puzzler has intended them to create. There is no bigger picture until the image begins to emerge from the correctly placed constituent pieces. The serious puzzler lets the puzzle-maker lead them down countless dead-ends and cul-de-sacs before they start to see the wood from the trees. Finally, the puzzler meets the puzzle-maker when the last pieces are placed and the Rockeby Venus, or Piccadilly Circus at night, or a Redwood forest, lie complete on the tabletop … Imagine a jigsaw that could represent any image the user wished for, yet still retaining the puzzling and struggle of the plain, old jigsaw Perec so adored. This is the artist's challenge in Open Studio. (Scott, 2012e)

I wrote some preparatory ideas in early 2012 and I was initially very interested in creating an immersive and interactive sound installation that would be activated in different ways

by visitors. I wrote a piece of prose for a work completed in 2012, entitled *The Sounds of Central Laeitana* (see figure 6 for an image of the installation), that became a starting point for my ideas. The work was an imaginary album of historical field recordings constructed from contemporary recordings I made in Barcelona. The record featured the feverish sleeve-notes of an early (and fictional) field recordist, and explored the generative gap between sound and source afforded by the invention of sound recording technology:

> So after sleeping, I forge the meaning. My eye maps the terrain; the village, the boats, the children playing, and it draws lines between cause and effect. But those sounds tilt the paper and the ink drips. See, the eye does not sleep, it is covered, but it remains fixed. The object remains. But listen, the sound tricks you, so the cat's footsteps become murderous. Hermes plays his harp. The lullaby connects the dream to hearing. Sound is the wakeful eye dreaming. (Scott, 2012f)

Figure 6: Scott, D. (2012) *The Sounds Of Central Laeitana*

I was interested in presenting visitors with work that played with the gap between the source of a sound, and how its sound is to listened to, heard or understood. I was actively exploring the strategy of 'acousmatic' listening, as proposed by Pierre Schaeffer in his work (Schaeffer, 1956/2012):

> For Open Studio my intention is to create spaces occupied by dreaming objects. By this I mean material things; pens, paper, rubbish, wood, paint, that, when encouraged through gesture and touch, conjure up their oneiric aspect.

> Such a sound can be perceived as something in itself, occupying its own space apart from the object. By taking the dreaming sound, and moving it across the space of the room, I hope to create ambiguous and fluid space in which children can gradually create their own modes of navigation and understanding. (Scott, 2012e)

There was an undoubtedly poetic aspect to my initial intentions, but with this ambition of 'dreaming objects' I also had a keen desire to pragmatically explore the listening present in the Open Studio encounter:

> The act of making a sound presupposes a listener. Furthermore, the technique of the acousmatic, dream-sound allows the child making the sound to both listen to their own sound, and be aware of it being listened to by others. Hopefully, it engages children in an experience of being attentive, and attended to, through sound. The mode of listening is one of inclusion and belonging. This communicative aspect of sound is perhaps unique to the aural register.
>
> Listening is a constant state of becoming; a straining for meaning. Certain listening experiences lead us to meaning, yet once meaning is grasped listening ceases. The intention for the sounds are the dreams of objects pieces is to create a space for listening without meaning. (ibid.)

The proposal was also drawing on the work on Jean Luc Nancy (discussed in the previous chapter) and his proposal that listening is a 'straining towards meaning' (Nancy, 2008, p.6).

2.3 Acousmatic And Reduced Listening

Pierre Schaeffer used the term *acousmatic* listening (1952/2012) to refer to the situation of listening to a sound divorced from its source. The term was derived from accounts of Pythagoras' teaching, where students sat and listened to their teacher delivering lectures from behind a screen, remaining unseen throughout. Within Greek pedagogical theory placing all the student's attention on the content rather than the source of that sound resulted in more effective learning. For Schaeffer, the situation was analogous to that of listening to pre-recorded sound through a loudspeaker.

When listening to, for example, a recording of a train, the listener is listening to the *sound* of a train and cannot see the original train. Because of this gap, only afforded by the time-travelling magic of tape recording, Schaeffer argued that the sound of that train could be understood as a separate entity; as an object distinct from that original source. He called this the *objet sonore* or sound object. This sound object could now be analysed according to parameters such as pitch, grain, density or timbre, notions entirely separate from the source of that sound (the train made of pistons, wheels and slamming doors, for example). Schaeffer subsequently developed the strategy of reduced listening, which was premised on an intentional bracketing-off of sound from its source, to exploit further this acousmatic situation and to allow a deeper understanding of sound as a thing-in-itself[1].

For Schaeffer, after days in his studio, the sound of a train did become something other than 'a train'. He notes how it slipped from being 'bound to objects and events in the material world' (ibid) - and became something in its own right. It was the acousmatic mode of listening that afforded Schaeffer this transformation, and it was in the strategy of reduced listening that he could creatively exploit this. It was because he could separate sound and source through the novel technology at his disposal that he could entertain such a transformative relationship with his material.

2.3.1 *Incidental Music* And *Scrib*

Returning to Open Studio, I was very interested in the acousmatic situation of listening and its potential for offering listeners a more creative and open response to sound and the possibility to, through their listening, reimagine certain sounds as something other than their source[2]. I was interested in finding ways in which participants could get that sense of the 'whole art being in the hearing'.

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[1] Schaeffer's work drew heavily on Husserl's notion of bracketing and *epoche* (see Kane, 2007 for a discussion of this issue).

[2] This was an idea I had been exploring in my work before my PhD and also within an ongoing academic interest in the claims of representational sound practices such as field recording, that made mimetic claims on the presence of a source in a sound recording (see Scott, 2013c for a more detailed example of this idea.)

Figure 7: Scott, D. (2012) *Incidental Music*

My first two Open Studio works were installations that encouraged interaction from the audience to trigger various sounds through touch, sounds that were then spatialised through the Clore Education Space at Tate Modern via a laptop and eight speakers. The first, entitled *Incidental Music*[3] (Scott, 2012a), was an installation consisting of assorted items of 'rubbish' (cardboard boxes, plastic, paper cups etc.) on a table that were attached to a number of contact microphones (see figure 7). Visitors could manipulate the rubbish to create their own improvised composition, with the title referring to the fact that the sounds made were incidental to the act of rummaging and manipulating the objects.

The second work *Scrib* (Scott, 2012b featured three black panels, again amplified via contact microphones, fed through delays and effects and then spatialised. Audiences were encouraged to draw, scribble and write on musical manuscript paper that was placed on the black panels, so creating a soundscape of scribbling sounds across the room (see figure 8).

2.3.2 Reflections On *Incidental Music* And *Scrib*

Both *Incidental Music* and *Scrib* played with acousmatic listening by routing the sounds made by participants to the speakers via a delay effect of between one and thirty seconds.

[3] See USB file '2 Incidental Music.wav' for a sound recording of the installation.

The sounds were processed in different ways, retaining some of the qualities of the original sound, but also being distinct enough to take on a new grain or timbre.

Figure 8: Scott, D. (2012) *Scrib*

Some children responded to this temporal gap by running from the sound source to the speaker, attempting to catch the sound as it emerged from the speaker. The work also encouraged a lot of interaction between the participants, with families trying out sounds and rhythms and discussing what they sounded like. Many visitors didn't really scribble, as I had hoped, and instead used the pencils as drumsticks and played the panels percussively. For many, my careful arrangement of objects and speakers (as well as light) was merely a backdrop to making a lot of noise.

I suggest my own desire to foreground an acousmatic listening seemed to work against my objective to 'create ambiguous and fluid space in which children can gradually create their own modes of navigation and understanding.' Both works were essentially closed-systems, and part of their closed-ness seemed connected to the limited and reductive nature of the listening I was concerned with. They disallowed a listening between participants, and

participants were limited by the materiality of the objects they were presented with. Other sounds they made, other things they listened to were not implicated in the work, and so were ignored. In this regard, the works inhibited the imaginative leaps I wanted participants to engage in. Or, perhaps more accurately, the work was allowing imaginative leaps, but I had no real understanding of what they were, so I felt at the time that the work was failing. The notion of the acousmatic and the more strategic technique of reduced listening all contributed to a 'reduced' work where listening was bracketed towards a particular activity of sounding, rather than opened up to the imaginations of the participants and their multiple listening encounters in the space, acousmatic or otherwise.

In 2012 I was also aware of the problems in creating a space for listening[4] and in making the listening the central focus of the work:

> It has been a challenge to create a listening space that both focuses attention on listening without being too directive, too obtuse or too 'barely-there'. Many visitors to Open Studio are looking for something to make, something that can then be gazed at, held up and told, 'I made you'. Sound is ungraspable, and once there is gone again. Listening is even more elusive: even if they are directed and told 'how' to listen (close your eyes, focus on the sound in the speaker, move around etc.), how can one know if the visitor is listening 'properly'? So sound could frustrate the visitor: nothing is made, nothing is seen, and nothing is held longer than a second. (Scott, 2012e)

2.4 Carla Rinaldi And Pedagogies Of Listening

As Open Studio progressed my lack of surety about the 'success' of the listening in the project was partly due to my limited conception of what the listening ought to be. By focusing on the sonic content of the installations, and overlooking many of the social and participatory elements, I was pursuing an idea that was only partially relevant to what was actually happening, or what could happen, within my conception of a listening-based Open Studio. This focus meant I underplayed or plainly disregarded a number of other influences on the project that seem crucial now (in 2017) but seemed less so in 2012.

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[4] I return at length to this quandary in Chapter Five (p. 152), where I discuss how listening can create a space.

Whilst working on the Open Studio project Susan Sheddan introduced me to the writing of educationalist Carla Rinaldi and her work on a pedagogy of listening. Rinaldi is a key figure in the Reggio Emilia educational movement in Italy. The Reggio Emilia method (named for the region in Italy where the movement began) is an approach that places the child's ways of knowing the world at its centre, offering a self-guided curriculum focusing on creativity and relationship building. For Rinaldi listening is a central methodology within such a practice - both in terms of listening to children and children learning to listen to the world around them. I cited the following text in my report:

> Listening to ourselves, 'internal listening', encourages us to listen to others but, in turn, is generated by being listened to.
>
> Listening as time. When you really listen you get into the time of dialogue and interior reflection, an interior time which is made of present time, but also past and future time.
>
> Listening is generated by curiosity, desire, doubt and uncertainty. This is not insecurity but the reassurance that every 'truth' is so only if we are aware of its limits and its possible 'falsification'. (Rinaldi in Edwards, C., Gandini, L. & Forman, G. ed. 2012, p.234)

In my report I added my own commentary on this section, writing that 'the transformative power of listening is highlighted in Rinaldi's text 'Some Meanings of Listening' (Scott, 2012e). Whilst the text refers to listening in its linguistic mode, the insights can also apply to listening-to-sound and the meaning found through this kind of listening can be as profound'. Reading this back in 2017 my reflections on the text in 2012 seem partial and problematic. Then I was distinguishing between Rinaldi's ideas on 'listening in its linguistic mode' and my own work which I claimed was more about 'listening to sound' rather than people. Yet now (in 2017) Rinaldi's conception of listening seems much more resonant and rich in relation to my own ambitions for the work than the more sound-focused and analytical modes of Schaeffer and Chion.

Re-engaging with Rinaldi's ideas in 2017, after the journey my research has gone on via dialogical art practice and space-making (which I will explore in Chapters Three to Five) I realise her ideas foreshadowed where my practice went after Open Studio. Rinaldi

suggests:

> Listening, therefore, as 'a listening context,' where one learns to listen and narrate, where individuals feel legitimated to represent their theories and offer their own interpretations of a particular question. In representing our theories, we 're-know' or 'recognise' them, making it possible for our images and intuitions to take shape and evolve through action, emotion, expressiveness, and iconic and symbolic representations. (2006, p.50)

This conception of listening as a 'listening context' now seems like a strong analog for my desire to create a 'listening space', a concept I develop in Chapter Five. The notion of a listening context suggests a broader frame of listening beyond just the ear of a single listener, where individuals listen with each other, and their listening operates actively, 'allowing images and intuitions' to take shape. My desire was for exactly the situation Rinaldi describes, where participants 'feel legitimatised to represent their own theories' on what a sound means and for these to emerge through 'action, emotion, expressiveness' and so on. The fact I sidelined Rinaldi's ideas somewhat as they dealt more with people and language rather than the 'sound' that sound art was concerned with suggests that such ideas were somehow beyond the remit of sound art's canon of listening, as I had understood it.

2.5 A Distrust Of Language

It is slightly bewildering to look back on my thinking at this stage and to question why I did not embrace Rinaldi's ideas more fully in the modes and strategies of listening I was considering in 2012. Whilst the ideas were helpful and inspiring to me, I placed them outside the constellation of 'sound art listenings' that I was investigating. This was due to my focus on the canon of listening within sound art, one that privileges an atomist and musical listening to sound. Moreover, I suggest that my focus on listening to sound, rather than listening to language, was also symptomatic of wider distrust of words and language within the discipline. This distrust may be to do with sound art's adoption of its conceptions of sound from musical discourses (such as Theodor Adorno's or Pierre Schaeffer's). Within musical discourse listening is connected to the following of musical logic, be it pitch, rhythm, and structure, or timbre, grain and morphology. All these foci sidestep the semantic, and, more to the point, bilateral and communicative aspects of language (and sound): much sound art does not require an audience to talk back. Instead,

it presents sound, and an audience listens. They may encourage a listening that is creative, innovative or even hard work, but not one that preempts a response in the moment to the work, as in a conversation.

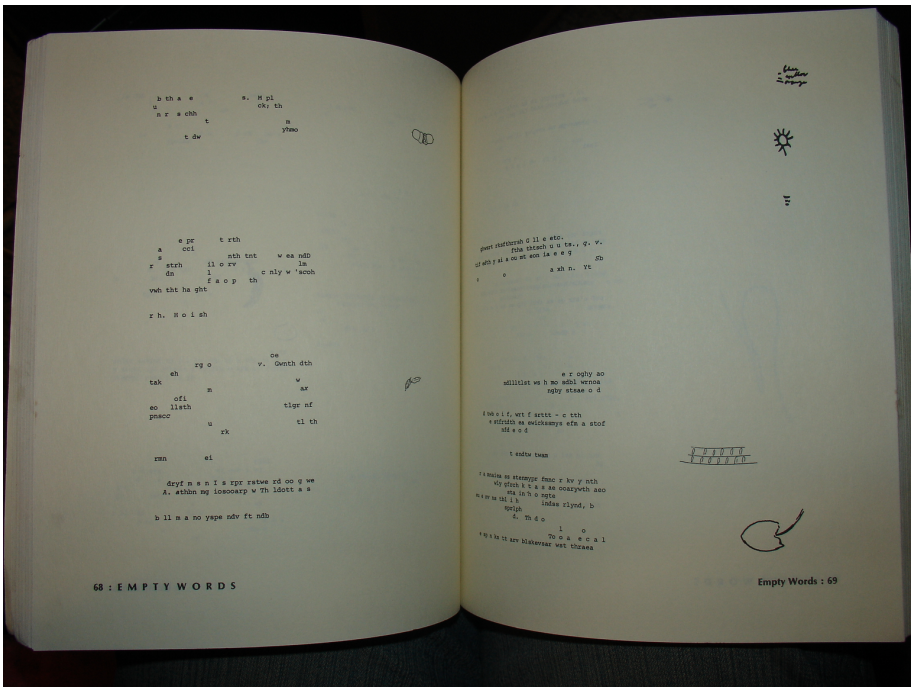

Figure 9: Cage, J. (1979) *Empty Words (excerpt)*

Cathy Lane's project Playing With Words (2010) investigates the spoken word within art practice and notes that the artists featured are often concerned with deconstructing language: reducing it to phonemes, and dissembling meaning in favour of a material 'feel'. The sleevenotes for the CD of the project suggests:

> The concerns of these contemporary artists in many cases relate back to their historical antecedents such as the poets, performers and other artists working with sound in the early part of the twentieth century, including the Futurists, Zaum poets, Dadaists and Lettristes who sought to invent new languages and new words in order to express their vision of reality and to deconstruct and reduce the power of language.

This deconstruction is also present and audible in a number of key sound art works of the twentieth century that work with language. John Cage's *Empty Words* (1974, see figure 9), and Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting In A Room* (1969) are both pieces that deconstruct language, representing it as sonic material, rather than semantic codes. Both works take language

and render it more and more unintelligible as communication. I don't say this as a criticism; rather I simply present them as examples of sound art working against language through their focus on sound as a material (as per Schaeffer), rather than as a mode of dialogic exchange.

2.6 *The Inaudible Archive Of Incredible Promise*

In late 2012 I developed a work entitled *The Inaudible Archive of Incredible Promise* (2012d). I felt it was a more satisfactory manifestation of my ambitions for Open Studio. In the piece participants were provided with the contents of a sound archive on library cards, which they then made audible by vocalising and then recording them onto one-minute long cassette tapes. These sounds then became the audible content of the collection. At the time I felt the work was a more open piece, one that allowed for a deeper engagement with listening and sound, as per my initial ambition for Open Studio:

> Allowing for multiple possible hearings and understandings as well as maintaining the possibility of an extended listening time-space, and delineating the sound-space enough to allow this attentive listening to arise. (Scott, 2012e)

Figure 10: Scott, D. (2012) *The Inaudible Archive of Incredible Promise (setup view)*

This was because it still allowed for an acousmatic and imaginative listening to occur, but

they emerged more from participants own listening and experience, rather than from a collection of objects that I selected and controlled. It was still framed by a conceit I had devised, but this acted more akin to the jigsaw pieces I outlined in my report. The pieces of the jigsaw were present but all kinds of combinations were possible.

The work featured a large two-metre by one-metre wooden panel displaying two hundred, one-minute long cassettes (see figure 12). Some of these were blank; others had already been recorded onto and featured doodles and drawings written by participants directly onto the transparent plastic of the cassette (around 600 tapes were made by the end of the project). Next to the display was a long bench on which six tabletop tape players play recordings previously made for the archive. On the floor in the room there were three one metre square panels (modelled on Foley sounding boards) on each of which sit three top loading cassette recorders and a box of noise-making materials (see figure 10). Finally, there were multiple library cards on each panel describing the contents of the archive (see figure 11).

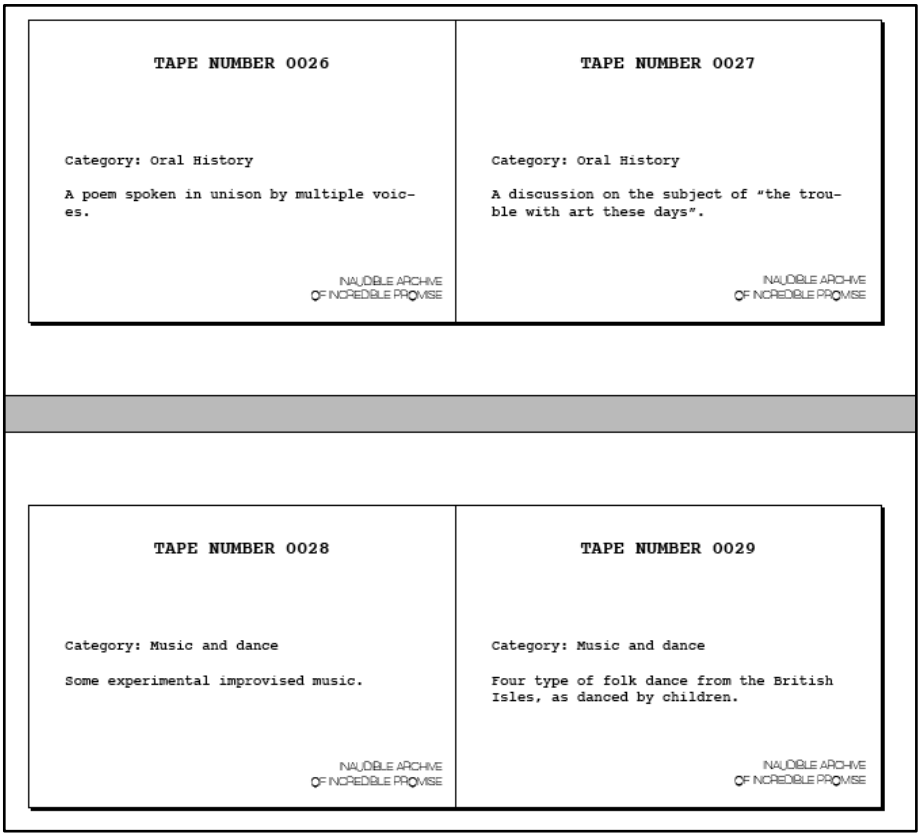

Figure 11: Scott, D. (2012) *The Inaudible Archive Catalogue Cards*

Throughout the devising of the project I was again exploring the modes and strategies of listening derived from the canon I had collected. In this case these modes and strategies were (again) acousmatic listening; causal listening, derived from Michel Chion; 'imaginative' listening, taken from Don Ihde's writing in *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (1976); 'innovative' listening, from Salomé Voegelin's writing in *Listening to Silence and Noise: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (2011) and her essay 'A Speech for Noise' (2008); and Pauline Oliveros' Deep Listening (2005).

Figure 12: Scott, D. (2012) *The Inaudible Archive Tape Collage*

2.6.1 Imaginative Listening

The auditory imagination is vibrant, sometimes disturbingly so, breaching the boundaries between self and other via hallucination or uncontrollable internal voices. Popular science

books such as Oliver Sachs *Musicophilia* (2007) or Daniel B. Smith's *Muses, Madmen, and Prophets: Hearing Voices and the Borders of Sanity* (2007) offer many examples of voice hearing, auditory hallucinations and neurological anomalies involving imagined sound. In *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (1976) Don Ihde describes an experiment in imaginative listening in which he listens to Mozart whilst also imagining the music playing at the same moment, augmenting the real sound with his own extended notes. He describes this a 'copresent polyphony of auditory experience of the perceptual and imaginative modalities' (p.134), suggesting an ability to inaudibly conjure up both sound in the mind's ear and to listen to this sound in counterpoint to external 'real world' sounds.

Kendall Walton, in *In Other Shoes: Music, Metaphor, Empathy, Existence* (2015) writes of a more dreamlike listening, different to the intellectual hard work suggested in Ihde's experiment. He asks, 'in what ways does music engage our imaginations? … Imagining as I understand it can be spontaneous, nondeliberate, a passive experience rather than something one does' (pp. 154/155).

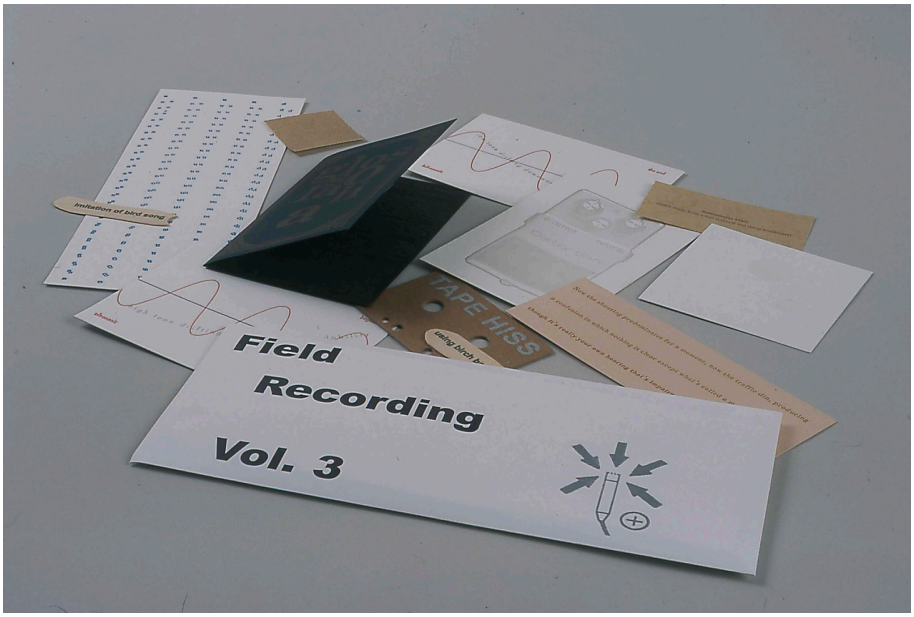

Figure 13: Meehan, S. (2003) *Field Recordings Volume 3*

This imaginative listening is present in a number of silently sounding artworks. It's a modality explored explicitly in Sean Meehan's *Field Recordings Volume 3* (2003, see figure 13), which prompts the auditory imagination with words. This text work is 'a collection of letterpress printed matter…meant to be consumed in the same manner a recording is listened to…when used in concert with the viewer's ideas the piece can suggest and shape a silent listening experience' (Meehan, 2003). It was also a mode I had explored in my

own work *Field Recordings of South London Windmills* (see figure 14), created during my MA at the London College of Communication and the subject of a journal article in Organised Sound, published at the beginning of my PhD (see Scott, 2011). The work consisted of field recordings made at the sites of former windmills and played with an imaginary listening to history and absent buildings.

Figure 14: Scott, D. (2010) *Field Recordings of Former South London Windmills*

Such works are explicit in demanding what R Murray Schafer calls in his essay 'Open Ears' (2003) the 'ear of the imagination'. In the same essay Schafer also goes on to note how haiku poetry developed a subtle and powerful play with the auditory imagination, citing the following verse by Basho as an example:

> The voice of the cuckoo
> Dropped to the lake
> Where it lay floating
> On the surface (cited in Murray Schafer 2003, p.36)

This listening imagination is also encouraged in contemporary forms such as the Onkyō performance discussed earlier, where quiet performances make it, in the words of one reviewer, 'absolutely impossible to judge whether the individual listener's perception of the seemingly imperceptible shifts is based on the listener's own consciousness or an actual physical occurrence' (cited in Lourde, 2008, p274).

2.6.2 Imaginative Listening In *The Inaudible Archive*

In the case of *The Inaudible Archive of Incredible Promise* I was asking audiences to actively engage with imaginative listening by asking them to imagine a sound, and then to make it with their voices and with objects. I developed the idea after spending time on the British Library National Sound Archive website and reflecting on the evocative nature of the catalogue's descriptive texts.

The catalogue descriptions required an imaginative listening on the part of the casual browser. The actual sound on the recording *becomes* 'a common starling' or 'Away In A Manger (preceded by a conversation)' (two examples from the archive) through the suggestion of the catalogue description. This 'program' creates a particular narrative for the sound offered: the browser listens in a different way, ready to match the sound heard with memories of carol singers, for example. The program also focuses the browser's ears onto specific signifiers within the sound heard: they listen to the starling rather than the wind or running water in the background.

In relation to location and nature recordings this notion may seem rather trivial to point out - we listen to the starling because we want to hear the starling, so that is what we hear - but it highlights how the conditions of its presentation encourage a particular mode of listening that leads to a particular understanding of that sound[5]. The reading of the sound archive 'program' involves an imagined listening to the forthcoming sound before actually hearing it: one 'pictures' the sound of a starling (or an approximation of a starling, or a guess of what a starling might sound like) before one listens to the sound. Our ability to do this might predetermine whether or not we proceed with the listening. This is certainly the case in my own experience of trawling the incredible array of sounds on the British

[5] This presentation is further nuanced by the listeners existing knowledge of the recording. They may be aware of the recordist's (Lawrence Shove) work, of his intentions and techniques, for example.

Library National Sound Archive website. If I feel I know what something sounds like (i.e. I can imagine it) I may not click my mouse, if it's something new (and my imaginative listening draws a blank silence) then I may click, so I can make it audible and understandable. This comparison of remembered and actual sound continues during the hearing of the recording itself, enacting Don Ihde's 'copresent polyphony'. I am satisfied when the starling I imagine matches the starling I hear, or I may be surprised and delighted when it deviates from that imagined hearing, a deviation that then informs and alters my imagined hearing on future occasions.

Figure 15: Scott, D. (2012) *The Inaudible Archive of Incredible Promise (Detail)*

I wanted to creatively exploit this dialectic between the imagined and the actual in *The Inaudible Archive*. By reading the library cards and then beginning to imagine the sounds on them audiences would employ this imaginative listening. The tape recordings taken from *The Inaudible Archive* often contained initial conversations about what the sounds would sound like:

> "High-pitched … loud … quiet … beeping … buzzing"
> "What noise does the bird make?"
> "How do they sound when they're dancing? They go 'boom boom boom!'"

Each comment or question above refers to the sounds 'heard' after an internal and

imaginative listening to the archive contents, offering some indication of the internal listening process at play. After some dialogue the participants then began voicing the recording. Visitors made audible the written descriptions by vocalising and making sounds with Foley objects and then recording the sounds onto the tape recorders.

2.7 Listening Out Loud: Pauline Oliveros, Deep Listening Within *The Inaudible Archive*

As well this imaginative aspect I was very interested in how the piece enacted a performance of listening with the body, manifest via the voicing of the proposed sound. Through vocalising, one began to hear the sound, with the body itself acting simultaneously as a sounding and a listening device. Groaning, buzzing, hissing, beeping; all means of making audible and striving towards a 'hearing' of the description on the library card. Both the ear and the sounding body enacted the listening. Vocalising provided the conditions for a particular form of listening: the participant is listening to the understanding reached by their imaginative inner ear, and hearing those sounds embedded in the grain of their own voice. This listening out loud was a means of both making audible, and making correct, as with each voicing there was a listening that hears that voice and determines its adequacy. Each hearing would feedback to the body, enacting tiny shifts of flesh and muscle, until the voiced sound, the listening body, and the auditory imagination were in harmony. With that, the visitor would say, "There, we've done it."

I called this process listening out loud, and I saw it as a strategy within *The Inaudible Archive*, it was the process by which participants heard the archive as something audible. And due to its discursive aspect, it was also a very social form of listening. A group member would make the sound they thought was most suitable and then a discussion would ensue about its fidelity to the text on the card.

It was only after coining this name that I found a reference to 'listening out-loud' in the work of Pauline Oliveros, specifically her text score 'Tuning Meditation', part of *Sonic Meditations* (1974), which reads 'inhale deeply; exhale on the note of your choice; listen to the sounds around you, and match your next note to one of them; on your next breath make a note no one else is making; repeat. Call it listening out loud' (ibid.)

The context for Oliveros' listening in this work was quite different to *The Inaudible Archive.*

'Tuning Meditations' has been as described as a work that is 'elegantly simple and forms a bond of community through sound. A stunning and perfectly reflective work, it is a shifting chord-mass incorporating the best intentions of the deep listeners who participate' (Tomer, 2017). Oliveros' piece is a work for a singing group and concerned with creating music. However, this communality and reaching out to others through listening and voicing was more relevant to *The Inaudible Archive* and I will return to these aspects of Oliveros' work with regards to projects I undertook later in my research (see Chapter Four, p.133 and Chapter Five, p.160). I should note that at the time I thought that the relatively noisy and social process of *The Inaudible Archive*, and its humorous and absurdist aspects were not in tune with Deep Listening's more meditative approaches to listening.

2.8 Innovative Listening

The final stage of the piece involved listening to the sounds recorded by others. After each recording was made there was then the opportunity for subsequent listeners to re-catalogue it again, often as a different sound. Footsteps becoming rain, singing becoming animal calls and so on. Once vocalised and then recorded, the 'rainforest at night' or the 'experimental/improvised music' became a sound to be listened to, and one's listening moves from being vocal (with the vocal cords acting as ears, feeling the sound exit out of the body) to being one of listening to recorded sound. The visitor's listening now offers mutable and open hearings of the material.

When listening to the tapes the situation was again acousmatic. This mode was extended due to the fact that we were also listening beyond the source of the human voice, towards that which the voice is signifying (the rainforest or the bird). So the listening moved between an acousmatic hearing of a source-less sound, enjoying the sound object alone, and a listening that seeks both the source of the sound - a voice - and that which the voice is representing - a rainforest.

This play of ambiguous meanings and potentialities opened up *The Inaudible Archive* to what Salomé Voegelin has called an 'innovative listening' (2008). This is in contrast to a causal listening that seeks a clear and present source – 'a starling' or a 'rainforest at night'. An innovative listening gives the listener agency to generate the sound as it is heard. Voegelin uses the term to describe a listening that invents its own subject.

Brian Kane describes Voegelin's position as that of 'listener as producer' (Kane, 2013).

Voegelin's listening strategy calls, in Kane's words 'for a listener to suspend aspects of sounds that concern genre, category, art historical context and purpose' (ibid.) and to exist just in that moment of listening. It is a resolutely phenomenological approach to listening, bracketing off all but the experience of listening.

In *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (2012), Voegelin places sound's materiality primarily within the perceptual domain of the listener, rather than in the sound itself. For Voegelin, it is in listening that sound (as perceived) is generated. Listening 'produces, it invents, it generates' (p.13). Moreover, the listener, the critic, and the artist need to engage with sound art not by just recognising the presence of the sonic work, but by 'making the work with his own ears. He needs to be the generator of the work he critiques' (p. 28). Voegelin describes specific encounters with sound, offering implicit techniques of engagement, ones generated by her own subjective and contingent listening moments, but which still stand as strategies for entering particular sonic worlds. In an excerpt from the section on noise she describes listening to Merzbow and offers physiological, locational and psychological strategies for listening to the work: In 'a close and darkened room' where she 'takes its rhythm and run[s]…submitting to his sounds' (p.68), she is 'not passive in this rhythm but deliberately merges with the thinging of noise to become a noisy thing myself' (ibid.).

This notion of listening as a creative act offered some account of the listening at play in the 'listening-back' part of *The Inaudible Archive.* Listeners listened beyond cause, and towards an imaginative space, hearing what they desired to hear in the sound playing back from the cassette players. The same sounds were heard differently by different listeners as this imaginative play took hold and allowed them this 'innovative' approach.

2.8.1 The Limits Of Imaginative And Innovative Listening As Accounts Of *The Inaudible Archive*

I recognize that innovative, imaginative and out-loud listening all offered some account of the listening at play in the work, and they also were generative notions in the development of the work. I also recognize that I extended and expanded their meaning somewhat in my application of them, pushing them beyond phenomenology or music and towards something more playful, open-ended and amorphous. In this regard, I also proposed an interpretation of these concepts that was beyond what the originators of these ideas may have originally intended. It was into the social, communal and political arenas

that I felt I was edging these concepts, and I realized that they lacked efficacy when applied to those arenas.

For example, the discourse and practice around imaginative and innovative listening failed to account for or reflect on the affordances given to such a listening by the background and identity of the listener. This was apparent in the intergenerational dialogue that the work encouraged. Children may not have heard the term 'experimental/improvised music' (one of the catalogue entries[6]), and nor perhaps had some of the adults, so the group worked up their response to the library cards cues through dialogue, with no lack of speculation about what the text might mean. Indeed, one group's response to that particular library card was to make beeping noises with their voices and to simply intone the phrase 'experimental improvised music' for one minute until the cassette tape ran out. Another group's response would be completely different. Each subject's own listening history brought with it a different hearing of *The Inaudible Archive.* The sociality of listening, and how it operated in these exchanges between group members, seemed ignored by the listenings (innovative, imaginative, deep etc.) I was using to develop and account for this work.

Each imaginative listening was particular and informed by the multifarious identities of the participants. Beyond it describing a mode of listening, the notion of imaginative listening did little to explain, or enliven, how that imaginative listening operated, and how its different manifestations in each listener could be discussed. Imaginative listening, as discussed by Ihde, is a phenomenology-derived notion. It describes or invokes, a hearing of sound that operates at the level of individual perception, stripped of cultural and social context. The limits of the phenomenological approach became agents in my own dissatisfaction with the work. For a time I felt the work was trite or lacking weight, partly because my analysis of it was driven by a desire to seek out listenings within the work that weren't fully representative of what was actually occurring within the piece.

2.8.2 Phenomenology And Listening Within Sound Art

A phenomenological model of listening sets up listening as a relationship between an individual - the listener - and a sounding world. The term phenomenology describes a diverse and sometimes contradictory range of ideas, but one of its central strategies is to

[6] Listen to USB file '3 The Inaudible Archive Excerpt.wav' for this particular tape.

focus on acts of consciousness and how the world 'outside' appears within that consciousness. In this regard, it is a philosophical approach that positions the conscious sensing subject at the centre of its agenda. Much of the early work in phenomenology, and specifically the phenomenology of the senses, focused on the visual. I will not map out a full history of phenomenology over the past century as this is outside the remit of this study, rather I wish to argue that phenomenology has been a common reference within the sound arts, and, due its privileging of the subject and subjective experience, has contributed to an individualist and atomist (to return to Lipari's notion discussed in the introduction) paradigm of listening within the discipline that naturalises a model of the individual listener listening to a sounding world. Jean-Luc Nancy's *Listening*, Voegelin's work and Pierre Schaeffer's writings on reduced listening all utilise phenomenology-derived models to mark out listening's territory, and much theory of listening within electroacoustic music has continued within this paradigm (Smalley, 1997, Wishart, 1985).

I don't argue that phenomenological approaches to sound are inherently wrong, rather that they are only useful in certain contexts. Phenomenology was crucial for Schaeffer in developing his ideas of the acousmatic and reduced listening, and it went on to form a theoretical background to Michel Chion's work on listening modes and the sound object (Chion, 2009). Phenomenology is a useful strategy in particular circumstances but it is not an approach that can account for all aspects of listening. To use Sterne's formulation, it is a technique to be used in 'certain framed contexts'.

We can trace the outlines of the 'framed contexts' that such listenings developed, but, they are often partial and, due to the paradigm of bracketing and divorcing sound from wider networks of culture and meaning, overlooked.

As discussed earlier, Schaeffer's listening was contingent and born of a particular need at a particular time in history. The book *In Search of Concrete Music* (Schaeffer, 1952/2012) reveals a reflexive listening practitioner with an anxious desire to transmit his own listening to his audience from the off. Acousmatic and reduced listening are his attempts to universalise his own experience of listening to the sounds he makes. Arguably this couldn't have happened without the historically situated gamut of technologies, ideas and affordances that Schaeffer's job at Radiodiffusion Française allowed. Schaeffer's listenings are not universally applicable.

Much of the theory in Voegelin's book is prefaced or meditated by moments of intimate

biography. We eavesdrop of Voegelin listening to Merzbow in a darkened room or walking through a sound installation. These moments are opportunities for Voegelin to explore her perception in a rigorously phenomenological manner, which she does with zeal, but they also raise questions and problems which Voegelin does not address. We are confronted with her listening, but we are not told how she reached this point in her listening life: why does she listen in this way? As a reader, I am very aware of Voegelin as an individual who is listening, but I'm also conscious that this is an individual enmeshed in, informed by, created by a wider cultural context, yet Voegelin, because of her allegiance to phenomenology's bracketing techniques, ignores this fact. Voegelin does not refute this critique, as she notes in a 2012 interview, 'I talk about subjectivity but I don't want to talk about an essentialised gender nor an essentialised identity. I would rather invite the readers to re-think their own subjectivity and therefore their own gender and identity' (Voegelin, 2012). Yet, I suggest that by her rejection of explicit discussions of gender for fear of essentialising, she leaves a troubling gap in her model of listening. There are many ways to approach gender without essentialism (see Grosz, 1989/2002 for example) and then to explore this within listening, but we have to go to other writers to find an adequate approach.[7]

A phenomenological approach is itself at risk of essentialising listening by limiting its account of listening to only that of individual perception. By the word 'essentialising' I don't mean 'defining', as in arguing that the essence of a table is its functionality as a table and not as something other, rather I refer to a tendency to claim that a particular aspect of human action is somehow universal and so constitutes some essential element of all people, regardless of difference.

An essentialist narrative around listening allows the particularities of a listening to be relegated and made invisible. Essentialising neutralises listening and makes it difficult to critique. Ignore the context and *"Just listen",* we might say, suspending judgement and reflection, and (somehow) culture or convention. Such bracketing ignores the particularity of the listening we might be demanding, it renders the listener's own history, and the affordances that history offers, irrelevant, it displaces the need to explain or make coherent - it avoids questioning. The danger of essentialising is that the specificity of one form of

7 I should note that Voegelin is not apolitical in her work, she writes of the political agency in listening as a means of understanding others, but often through a listening that sidesteps culture and context. See also *Sonic Possible Worlds: Hearing the Continuum of Sound* (Voegelin, 2014).

listening is applied to the whole. Essentialist readings of listening place listeners into a homogenous category, suggesting all listening is the same[8].

So, through the development of *The Inaudible Archive,* I became more uneasy with the efficacy and relevance of the canon of listening to my practice. I recognised its relevance to certain kinds of music or listening contexts, but I sensed a deficit in its ability to account for and understand listening within the participatory and social settings I was working in.

2.9 *'Oyez!'* (2012) And Acoustic Ecology

However, in 2012, these concerns remained in the background, and somewhat unarticulated. A final work produced as part of the Open Studio project was a booklet of listening scores designed for families entitled *Oyez!* (Scott, 2012f, see figure 16). I continued with my scoping out of the canon of listening and the work explicitly engaged with the proposition mentioned above that a 'correct' listening could be undertaken through direction, and utilised a number of the ways of listening first laid out in the collection of modes and strategies from the beginning of this chapter. I wanted to explore this in a playful way and was keen to create a space for listeners to engage with the modes and strategies of listening I had been researching in a way that retained the open-ended and participatory quality of *The Inaudible Archive* but also contained a choreographic element. Each text suggested ways to move the body or to create intention that would lead to different listenings and different hearings of the participant's environment.

8 This discussion of essentialism is indebted to Anne Phillips essay 'What's Wrong With Essentialism?' (2009).

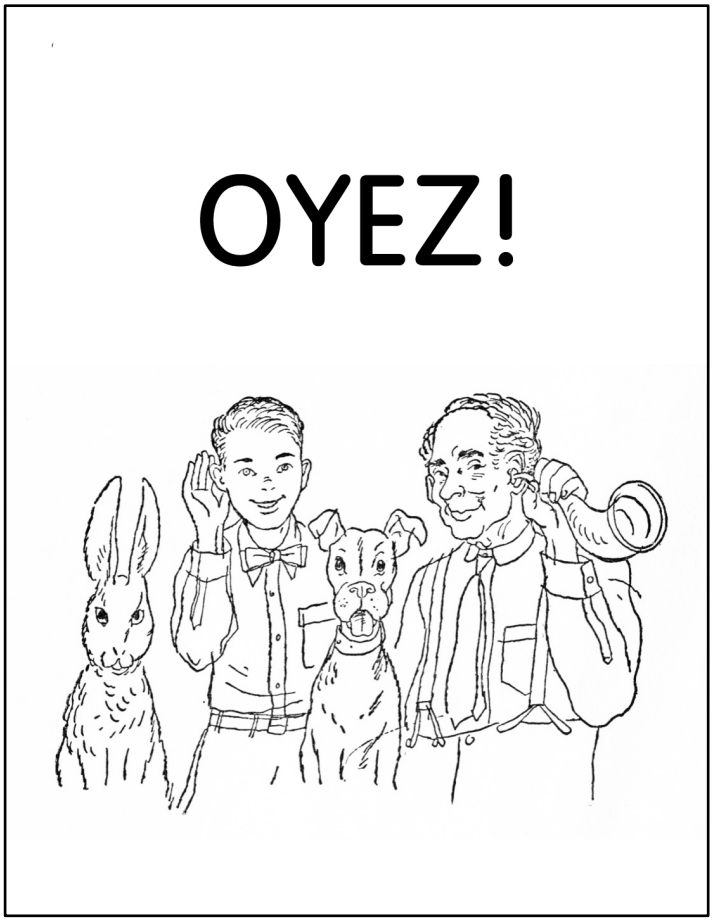

Figure 16: Scott, D. (2012) *Oyez!*

Oyez! engaged with practices of listening developed by the Acoustic Ecology movement, and with key practitioners such as R. Murray Schafer and Hildegard Westerkamp, via its encouragement to listeners to encounter and interact with sound in their environments. The techniques employed by Schafer, and then by subsequent practitioners associated with the movement, outlined in books such as *The Soundscape: The Tuning of the Word* (1977) or, more pragmatically, in his pedagogical pamphlet *Ear Cleaning: Notes for an Experimental Music Course* (1969), were aimed at an understanding of sound as related to its source, mostly within the realm of the everyday soundscape. Brandon LaBelle notes the difference between the approach of the acoustic ecologists and that of the reduced listening of Pierre Schaeffer, with each occupying 'two extremes on the sonic spectrum - one that strips context and the other which emphasizes it' (Labelle, 2006, p209).

Schafer also introduced the concept of 'schizophonia', describing the unease caused by hearing sounds whose source was not easily discernable. Schafer claimed the latter was a symptom of modern soundscapes and a source of anxiety for contemporary, urban listeners. For the acoustic ecologist, listening becomes both an aesthetic and analytic technique, with the latter even straying into a form of curative listening with the act of

reception being an act of discerning a symptomology of the soundscape. This form of analytic, soundscape listening has since been utilised across a range of disciplines including town planning and architecture as a strategy for future planning and construction of the built environment (see Positive Soundscape Project, 2009).

The soundwalk, developed by Hildegard Westerkamp and best outlined in her now seminal essay, 'Soundwalking', written in 1974 (in Carlyle ed. 2007, pp.49-51), is an example of a strategy of listening that draws attention to both the soundscape and the relationship between the individual and that soundscape. Westerkamp's text posits that 'a soundwalk is any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment'. Movement of the body in space, via walking, becomes a prerequisite, with the environment being understood (or heard) by 'going for a walk' and listening. As a methodology, 'Soundwalking' is full of explicit strategies for achieving its aims and understanding the environment's sonic character. It begins:

> Try to move
> Without making any sound.
> Is it possible?
>
> Which is
> the quietest sound of your body? (p.49)

Westerkamp's use of questions - drawing audiences into a dialogue with the work, and of drawing attention to the body in relation to the wider soundscape were an influence in the development of *Oyez!* The work was intended as a form of soundwalking, with participants taking the texts for a walk around a space. In this regard, the activity and strategy of soundwalking was very useful as both a methodological tool and as an account of listening in the work. Whilst emerging from my readings of Schafer's *Ear Cleaning* and Westerkamp's 'Soundwalking', the book was also designed to encourage further ways of listening in readers, all derived from sound art's canon of listening strategies, and used playful and accessible language. The texts also borrowed the brevity and humour of Fluxus event scores and also drew on the invitational text scores of Pauline Oliveros[9]. I wanted the texts to operate both practically and poetically. Yet, even with the texts embrace of a range of listenings, there were still gaps in how I could account for the

9 See *Sonic Meditations* from 1974 as an example.

listening taking place in *Oyez!*, as I shall outline below.

The texts were publicly presented as part of an event called Sound and Performance that ran in the Tanks space at Tate Modern on September 2nd, 2012. I altered it a little for the Sound and Performance Day as some of the scores in Oyez! required equipment and time that was not available on the one-day event.[10] The text I refer to herein is the original, unaltered version.

The book began with the following paragraph:

> In days gone-by, a town crier would walk through every town centre shouting out the day's news.
> They would start their report by yelling, 'Oyez! Oyez!', which means, 'Hear ye.'
> Today, they might say, 'Listen!'
> These pages contain some 'Oyez!' for you to try out. (Scott, 2012f)

The book's scores were accompanied by 'found' images taken from a book called *The Story of Sound*, a textbook on the physics I bought in a second-hand bookstore in San Francisco.

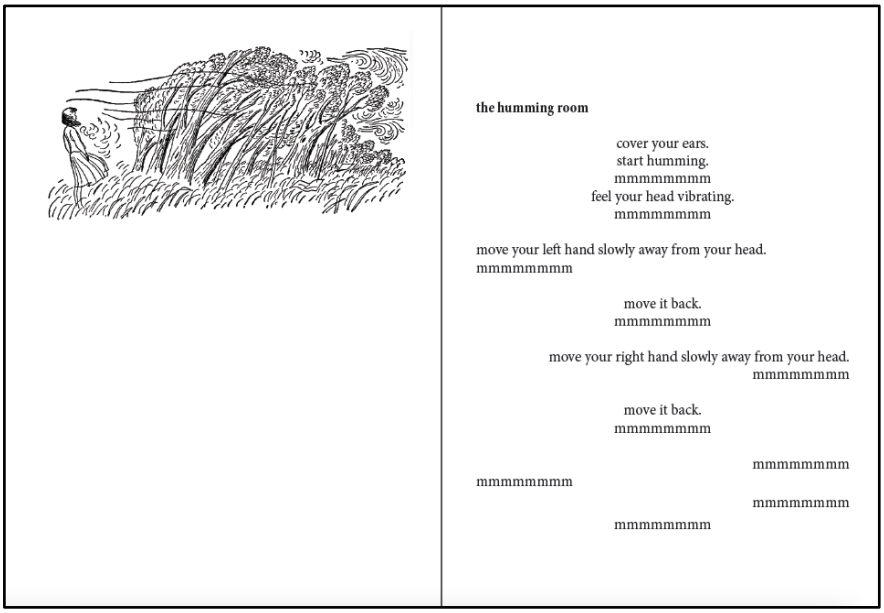

Figure 17: Scott, D. (2012) *'the humming room' from Oyez!*

'the humming room' (see figure 17), focused the listener on the body and listening through bones. Humming with one's hands over one's ears closes the eardrums to sound so hearing occurs via the inner ear as transduced through the bones in the head. By moving

10 See USB file '4 Oyez!.pdf'.

one's hand away from the head one ears the difference between sound as conducted through the body and sound as heard through air.

'cups' played with listening to frequencies and resonance using the hand as a resonating device. *'ear edges'* encouraged a gentle form of reduced listening, treating a sound as an object, drawing attention to the grain, shape and affective nature of the sound. *'I hear better with my knee than my calf'* took its title from a comment artist Bernhard Leitner made in an interview about his notion of body listening (Leitner, 2008). This text encourages a form of bodily listening inspired by Leitner's own work and works such as Kaffe Matthew's *Sonic Bed* (2005) where listening through the ear is combined with a tactile feeling of sound through the body.

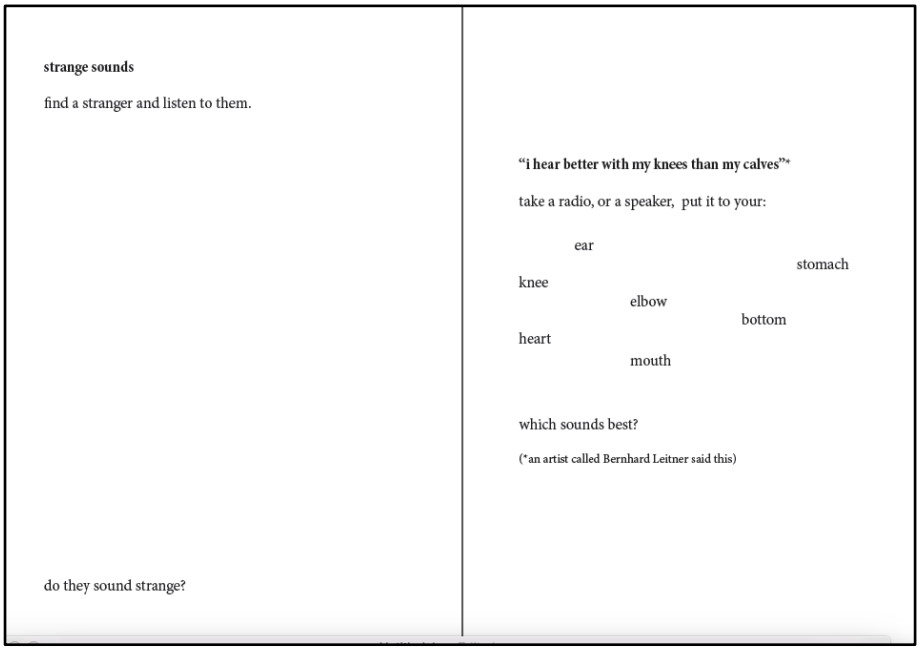

Figure 18: Scott, D. (2012) *'strange sounds' and '"I hear better with my knees than my calves"' from Oyez!*

'strange sounds' (see figure 18) suggested a more communicative mode of listening, offering participants the opportunity to speak to a stranger. It's interesting to note that, at the time, *'strange sounds'* seemed like an outlier in the book. At the time I wasn't quite sure what it meant. It was also the most dialogical, or socially-focused, text in the book, suggesting a potential encounter with another that may well take the form of a conversation, rather than an atomist listening to a sound.

My intentions with these works were to allow participants a space to explore their own

listening and to present listening as a creative and generative act. Once the books were given out I had little desire to control their listening beyond offering these suggestions. During the Family Day at Tate Modern visitors were given the booklets and we also offered a pair of 'listening devices' (see figure 19), consisting of earpieces I constructed from ear defenders and plastic tubing, with the whole experience being presented as the 'Tate/Tanks Audio Guide'.

Figure 19: Scott, D. (2012) *Sound and Performance Day at Tate Tanks, September 2nd, 2012*

Oyez!'s potential listenings were multiple, and how they were engaged was beyond my control, and it was this diversity and openness of listenings that interested me. Families would use the books and devices together, talking about the activity as much as just listening. Again, it was the dialogue, interaction and participation that I felt constituted the piece. This engagement was full of listening, but, again, I felt that it was a listening between people that was the crucial function, with the modes and strategies derived from existing sound art employed in the work being the means by which this dialogical, or relational or participatory listening could occur. The work appeared to be successful and engaging, with audiences wearing the headpieces and working through the texts for up to an hour a time, but, like with *The Inaudible Archive*, I felt aware of a deficit in my understanding of the listening at play.

2.9 *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener?*

After exploring the various modes and strategies within the canon of listening in sound art I was keen to put my ideas, findings and concerns to a group of sound art practitioners who had experience of the various listenings I was scoping out.

Figure 20: Scott, D. (2014) *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener? (Poster)*

In August 2014 I set up an event to test out some of the claims I was beginning to make in my research. The session was part of Salomé Voegelin and Mark Peter Wright's monthly event series Points of Listening which began in 2014 and continues to the present day[11]. *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener?* (Scott, 2014a) was a three-hour long dialogue on the subject of listening in sound art practice and theory. It proposed the existence of the mythological figure of the 'good listener' and suggested that the implicit existence of this ideal listener - a similar figure to the 'correct listener' alluded to in Chapter One - created an anxiety around listening, one that stemmed from a nagging

[11] See https://pointsoflistening.wordpress.com

sense of not listening 'properly' and hence not understanding or receiving sound as it should be received. Looking back at this work from the vantage of 2017 it is interesting how my perspective on listening had developed from a more neutral inquiry during 2012 to this anxious and often angry critique in 2014. The frustrations I had felt with the listening accounts I was exploring during the Open Studio project seemed to blossom into the almost sarcastic and satirical response that *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener?* represented. The promotional text was augmented by a poetic tirade against the notion of the normative 'good listener':

> The spectre of the good listener (the open, understanding, disruptive, inspired, penetrating, intellectual, instinctual listener) haunts me. The deep listener, the reduced listener, the profound listener. The active listener, the walking listener, the body listener. The quotidian listener, the ambient listener, the noise listener. The casual listener, the semantic listener, the acousmatic listener. A stern parent without compassion: 'You're not doing it right', 'You can't hear like they hear', 'You listen like a fool', 'You're missing something', 'You can't make sense of it can you?', 'You're failing', 'All these years with ears and you still can't hear right'. The spectre of the good listener is a figure in shadow wearing a long grey coat - a bogeyman in the eaves - a body with microphone appendage - a noggin with expensive headphones and serious ears - with closed eyes fasting to swell the ear's belly - a nodding confidant - a genius analyst - an ear that cures. The spectre of the good listener cripples me, ties me down, and force-feeds me meaningful sound. The spectre of the good listener wraps me in swaddle and beats a drum. That sanctimonious, pious, priggish & starchy listener. Fuck you, good listener. I'm OK. (Scott, 2014a)

Visitors entered the space and sat down around one of four tables. Drinks and food were provided to encourage a convivial, chatty atmosphere. On each table I placed a stereo microphone that recorded all the conversations (it was a seminar that listened to itself). These four microphones, when combined, created an eight-channel recording of all the conversations occurring concurrently (see figure 21). The work was intended to be live performative discussion on the subject of listening whilst acting as a form of listening in itself.

Figure 21: Points of Listening. (2014) *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener?*

The conversations during *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener?* were prompted by short introductory presentations where I proposed a dilemma or problem of listening. I began by introducing the notion of a 'failed listening' (more of which below) with examples from my own history as well as quotes from Lorraine Plourde's work (discussed earlier in Chapter One, p.38). A discussion ensued on the usefulness of this idea, whether or not others had experienced such a listening, and the causes and conditions of such a listening experience.

I played the group public speaker and listening consultant Julian Treasure's speech at a TED conference (Treasure, 2011). He proposed a widespread and uniquely contemporary deficit in listening skills - one that could be addressed by a deeper understanding of listening and a regular practicing of listening techniques. I choose his video as a concise, if occasionally trite, and fairly representative example of a tendency in sound practice to view everyday listeners (i.e. non-expert or non-specialist listeners) as deficient and in need of education. Such a position puts people like Treasure in the problematic position of the 'enlightened' listener who is there to 'improve' his audience I also had some ethical issues with Treasure's commercial exploitation of listening through his consultancy work for big brands and corporations. Concerns aside, the intention in viewing the Treasure video was to problematise its premise (that there is a 'listening deficit'), and to discuss whether such an expert listener exists, and, if it does, what constitutes it, and what gives such a listener credibility and agency. I also cited Adorno's writing on 'the regression of listening' (Adorno, 1938) as an earlier, more high-culture,

example of such a position.

Next, I proposed an approach to listening in sound art practice that was informed by Steven Connor's essay 'Sadistic Listening' and its discussion of listening within in psychoanalysis (Connor, 2014):

> Listening… is, of course, at the heart of psychoanalysis. It is psychoanalysis that has developed the most powerful understanding of interpretation practised through and as a mode of listening. Freud famously removed himself from the visual field of the analysand and encouraged a practice of resisting the patient's demand for interpretation. It is as though the analyst provides a subjunctive space in which the patient, or the patient's own words, must seem to listen to themselves, or listen to their being listened to. (n.p.)

Beginning with an image of Freud's chair, now in the Freud Museum in Swiss Cottage, London, I suggested that the process of making, then distributing or exhibiting or performing sound was a form of talking therapy, with the artist as the analysand and the audience in the invisible position taken by the analyst, as outlined above by Connor. The listening of this audience so becomes curative to the sound artist. This undeniably romantic view of the artist as confessor or expressionist was then discussed and debated by the group.

We finished the session with the question, "Who are the good listeners?" The issue of gender was raised here, referencing Steve Connor's comments in his 'Sadistic Listening' article that, traditionally, listening was seen as a feminine 'virtue', with women acting as confidante, medium, counsellor or other 'listening' positions. This form of gendered listening also meant that listening was degraded through patriarchal hegemony and presented as a lesser virtue to that of oratory, argument and persuasiveness (a notion echoed in Corradi Fiumara's writings as discussed in the introduction).

2.9.1 Failed Listening

I won't go into depth on responses to all of these issues, but I will linger on the first part of the discussion, as it raised some pertinent points with regards to listening's social and political aspects, notions neglected by some of the listenings explored above during the

discussion of Open Studio. The section began with my reading of the following anecdote (see figure 22):

Figure 22: Points of Listening. (2014) *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener?*

A Failed Listening

It was some time in the early 1990s. I was sitting in a friend's room in rural Wiltshire, 14 years old, an avid reader of the NME, new owner of the Happy Mondays album *Pills, Thrills and Bellyaches*, my hair permed to resemble Tim Booth, lead singer with earnest indie group James, and inhaling the first wisps of a five year fog of dope smoked in the recreation grounds of various villages lost on the Downs between Oxford and Swindon.

We were listening to a rave tape pulled from plastic casing likely to slice tiny lacerations into your fingers if opened too rashly. The recording was from the line-out of a mixing desk at a gathering on some unsuspecting farmer's lower field, all frantic rushes of hyperspeed Amen-breaks and hollering MCs. It was probably a Fantasia party, the most ubiquitous at the time, and, listening in a bedroom on a Saturday afternoon, it seemed so strange, like a music made by alien life. I had never been to a rave and the scene seemed full of a secret knowledge I was never party to and, however hard I listened, understanding evaded me. I always felt like I was listening to it in the wrong way; like I had failed in listening. I neither

> understood, nor simply enjoyed it. I nodded to my friend and mumbled, 'Yeah, sounds wicked.' (Scott, 2014)

Many of the participants were partly dismissive of 'failed listening', arguing that it was too strong a statement to describe moments when listening drifts, or finds no meaning in a sound. Some suggested that the fault, if there is a fault, may have lain with the sound, not the listening.

> Speaker: For me, it's a negative term. With some distance, you can wonder why it doesn't work. It happens in concerts - it happens to me. It's a good question to ask if it's the musicians or the listening, the relationship of my listening to the music going on. Also, in my practice of improvised music it's the listening between the musicians not knowing what the others are going to do.
>
> Different speaker: That's an excellent point, you put it better than me. Maybe the music that happens failed, and not the listening. That's a precondition almost. (Scott, 2014a)

Or the sound is not engaging the listener because of a lack of cultural context:

> Speaker: When he was talking I was thinking where's the failure? Could it be that just the music's the failure? Does it have to be in my listening? So I need to know the context, the culture, then my music can succeed (ibid.).

So, the onus is on the sound maker to understand the conditions of reception, and to tailor work to that end – a situation I discussed within my own practice in Chapter One. The latter position still implicitly suggests that a level of listening training may actually be necessary in some contexts - where after all, does that cultural conditioning come from? The word culture suggests a socialising process - an education in listening. A 'successful' listening may also be dependent on the personal situation of the listener. Listening may work one day and not the next.

> Speaker: Failed is too strong, maybe you're having a shit day and your mind's elsewhere and you're not giving it your full attention. It's not a failure. I can't get on board with that (ibid.)

Failed listening was also expanded upon to include situations where one's listening was listening for something and therefore missing things in the sound that didn't correspond to this search:

> Speaker: For the past three days I've been preparing this DJ session. It's a mix for a radio programme so I'm going through all this music. Tons and tons of music. CDs, files, online, YouTube and I feel like I'm searching for these sounds, I know what they are but I don't quite know what they are and I'm writing off these songs 4 seconds from the start. No, this isn't it, this isn't it. So for me, those signify failed listening experiences because they don't manage to bring to my ears these sounds I'm searching for (ibid.).

Also, for one participant, listening was inextricably bound up with questions of ethics, a subject that created within her the anxiety I was alluding to in the session's prologue:

> Speaker: This is where the anxiety comes for me - Whether I should be allowed to listen to this (sic)? Whether this should be distributed to everyone? That's my general sound anxiety. In lectures, if something's problematic - the sound is taken from a source and it hasn't been respected correctly - I find it extremely hard to even process even if it's a pleasing sounding piece. That's my extreme anxiety in most lectures (ibid.).

The participant goes onto note how such anxieties about listening affect the sound works she makes, to the extent that, at the moment of the session in 2014, she had stopped making sound work, concentrating instead on writing:

> Speaker: I want it to be totally ethical. Which is obviously not a perfect ideal. It's a utopian thing to want and that's the constant anxiety with listening and making sound. So now I just write about sound (ibid.).

So, the suggestion of failure, intended somewhat ironically in my initial reading, seemed partial, and perhaps born of my own history of listening rather than any universally felt sensation. Ultimately, no conclusions or consensus was reached, on failed listening or on any of the other issues, and this was entirely in the spirit of the debate. The intention was to foreground listening through speaking and listening to each other.

The key realisation I came away from *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener?* was not that my ideas were vindicated or trounced, rather it was that listening, across its modes and strategies, was a distributed activity, one that it operated across bodily, cerebral, perceptive and political modalities. Indeed, it was the format and listening nature of the event, with its disagreements and dialogue, that seemed most inspiring. I introduced the event with the comment that conversation was a form of listening in itself and I began to consider the event as a concrete form of listening practice, and the dialogue as a mode of listening in itself.

I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener? pushed me towards the work outlined in the next chapter. This was work that took my listening beyond sound art and deeper into dialogue and communication as well as highlighting the significant gaps in sound arts accounts of listening within such a context.

2.10 Seeking The Social In Listening

I will conclude this chapter with a reflection of the lack of 'the social' in sound and listening praxis within sound art. This will lead to a number of key questions that I will explore in the next chapter.

That some of the key movements in sound art and the musical avant-garde of the twentieth century were focused more on form and content rather than social context had been remarked upon in the literature. In *Sound Art* Alan Licht argues that 'sound art rarely attempts to…express something about the interaction between human beings' (2007, p.14). Douglas Kahn, writing on John Cage's attempts to open listening up to the extra-musical, notes how Cage's attempts fall short in dealing with the social:

> What becomes apparent in general is that while venturing to the sounds outside music, his ideas did not adequately make the trip; the world he wanted for music was a select one, where most of the social and ecological noise was muted and where other more proximal noises were suppressed. (Kahn, 1997, p. 556)

Perhaps the acoustic ecology movement offered the most social account of listening through its placement of the listener within an active and changeable soundscape, a soundscape often generated by *other* people. Yet, many soundscape- and acoustic ecology-based accounts of listening were concerned with the relationship of the individual to a

wider sound world that seems separate from that individual. It wasn't a social listening per se, but more a listening *to* society, at a remove and often analytical and diagnostic rather than embodied and dialogical.

I sought an account of listening that allowed for the social to be heard, and for that social listening to become a methodology for making work, in the same that reduced listening is a methodology for an electroacoustic composer, or soundwalking is for a field recordist. I wanted an account of listening that embraced the social and the aural and did not 'reduce'. This was a listening that occurred in participatory contexts such as Open Studio, and also in dialogical workshop settings like *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listening?* Brian Kane summarises these reductionist tendencies of sound art theory:

> The strangest part is the false dichotomy between sounds and society. It is as if attention to a sound can only occur when one reduces out its social, semiotic, institutional or historical aspects. It is as if sounds and society were two incompatible aspects of a whole … The choice is forced; one can either hear sounds as 'sounds-in-themselves' or as part of a social code. But one can never hear in sounds their sociality. (Kane, 2013, n.p.)

Here we have the phenomenological on one side, and an indexical, codified model of sound on the other - the latter being tied to the social, but approaching sound almost as a text, to be read and understood in its semiology. This distinction is apparent in Schaeffer's acousmatic paradigm and his technique of reduced listening. Indeed, the proposition of acousmatic sound contains a significant and assuaging element of mystification. The source becomes distant and unknowable, so allows us to ignore it and listen in a reduced manner. Yet, this is only one response to a recorded sound. Other approaches exist that accept the source as something valid and part of the sound. Indeed, whilst we might more readily follow Schaeffer's line of reasoning when presented with a recording of the whistle of a steam piston - hearing it as an object consisting of a particular volume envelope, grain and density, editable, amorphous and even deletable - when presented with the oral testament of a refugee (which I was during a project entitled *Speak As You Find* (2015c) which I will discuss in the next chapter) such reductionism seems crass and unethical. This is because the sound and source are inextricably linked. Whether we argue that this connection is a form of mimetic resemblance, or that there is a traceable essence of a person in the recording of their voice, or that a human somehow owns their own voice, so editing, deletion, distortion and so on being forms of vandalism, is moot. All of those positions undermine the claim that recorded sound is always a separation of sound and

source.

In the origin myth of the acousmatic, the case of Pythagoras and his students, the fact of Pythagoras physically being behind the curtain was crucial to the content of his words having validity. The sounds his students listened to and heard were not disembodied - they were their master's and imbued with all the registers of power, hierarchy and privilege that that particular pedagogical situation contained.

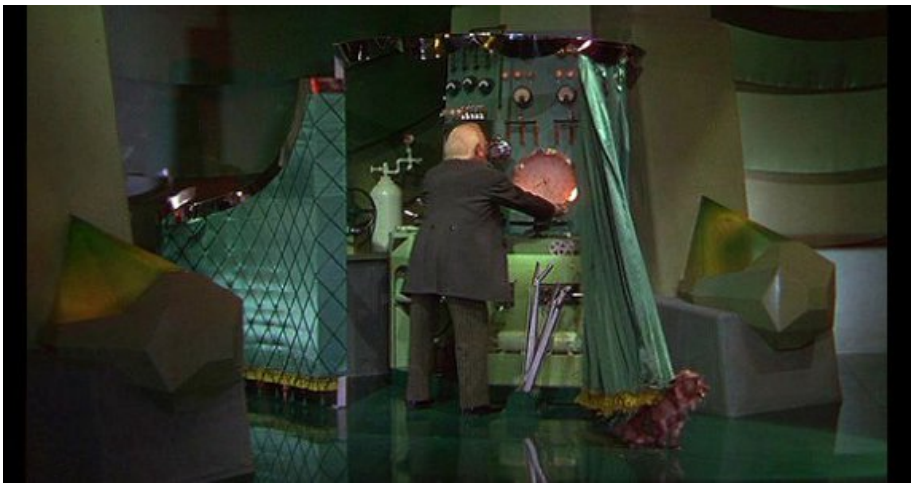

Figure 23: Metro-Goldwyn Mayer. (1938) *The Wizard of Oz*

Another fictional acousmatic exemplar is the voice of the wizard in *The Wizard of Oz,* a sound that also reflects this connection between sound and source. Michel Chion discusses the film in *Audio Vision* (1994, p.129) and called this kind of voice the *acousmêtre* - a ubiquitous and omnipotent force only weakened when inscribed into the visual field. When the wizard is revealed as lacking the power and presence that his voice suggested, the bathos engendered enacts a demystification (figure 23). The diminutive physical presence of the wizard as the source wins out over the previously omnipotent voice. I suggest this does not negate the power and awe that voice commanded before the reveal, or the perception of that voice by its auditors, rather it suggests the acousmatic paradigm is limited in its accounting for the wider social implications of that sonic encounter. By focusing just on the perceived sound of the Wizard, which we may do if we follow Voegelin and Schaeffer's example, there is very little space for the ironic distance that the film offers us in that famous reveal[12], an irony that reveals ideas related to power, the

[12] Irony is not a mode explored in much sound art, perhaps due to its phenomenology-informed theory and affective practice. As Julian Henriques writes in his study of sound system culture (Henriques, 2012, pp.451-453) there is a little room for irony when confronted by bass. This witty

gendered quality of the wizard's voice pre- and post- reveal, humour and so on.

How does sound art's phenomenology deal with the complex cultural histories of voice, or charisma, or bathos and or power that our listening is engaged with in that moment when the curtain is pulled back? In short - it doesn't. Such issues are not part of phenomenology-informed sound art's mission.[13] Again, as I stated earlier, this is not to critique the phenomenological method, rather it is to accept its limitations.[14]

2.11 Conclusion: Listening Beyond Sound Art

So this chapter constitutes a practice-led exploration of a number of strategies and modes uncovered in Chapter One. The work made during Open Studio explicitly engaged with reduced listening, acousmatic listening, imaginative listening, innovative listening, deep listening, soundwalking, Acoustic Ecology, listening with the body through works that encouraged these strategies through choreographic text, the use of particularly technology, as well as indirect cues through the conceits of the works themselves (the notion of the archive, or the introduction of 'listening devices' to go with the texts).

Whilst these strategies seemed relevant and generative, I found that limiting my interpretive and creative schemas to these canonical approaches left gaps in my understanding of other listenings at play in the work. That there was a constant and playful listening between participants was tangible, but it wasn't accounted for by any of the listenings I had been exploring. So my practice began leading me away from my original mission to scope out sound art's canon of listening.

To find accounts of listening and to find practices of listening within art that deal with

---

comment suggests an irony deficit in sound works that seek to immerse rather than distance.

[13] See also Paul Simpson's essay ''Failing on Deaf Ears': A Postphenomenology of Sonorous Presence' (2009) for possible way forward beyond phenomenological understandings of sound and listening.

[14] I do not claim here that phenomenology didn't deal with irony (see Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony* for a phenomenological account of the subject). I am suggesting that the phenomenological approach within sound art is focused on sound-in-itself and has not yet adequately explored irony within the discipline.

broader conceptions of listening, conceptions that incorporate social, political and more holistic concerns (to borrow Lisbeth Lipari's formulation discussed in the Introduction), required looking beyond the canon of listening within sound art. It also required a willingness to posit that there are artistic practices of listening that are not part of sound art at all. If much sound art was still allied to paradigms of 'sound-in-itself', or to musically-derived models of sound and listening, and there are other kinds of listening available to artists beyond these paradigms then I should explore more this possibility of a listening art distinct from a sound art. I had found an ally in the work of Cristina Rinaldi, but, as of 2012, I did not possess the theoretical or practical literacy required to fully understand and embrace such an approach within my own praxis.

So, I end this chapter with some questions that form the basis of the three chapters to follow:

What accounts of listening exist outside of sound art's canon of listening?
Can these listenings be understood as a form of artistic practice beyond sound art?
Is there still a connection between this proposed practice and sound art?

Of course, these questions interrelate. I knew accounts of listening existed outside of sound art (Cristina Rinaldi's was one, as an example), but could they inform and account for artistic practice? As mentioned earlier, I was not confident yet that they could, which was why I put Rinaldi's insights to one side during Open Studio. Moreover, if I could understand these practices as art, were they useful or relevant to sound art, or should they be understood as another form of practice? A listening practice? So, I decided to leave sound art behind for a while and consider more fully what it could mean to make work that was about listening as a social activity, as a form of communication, and not just a practice of sound.

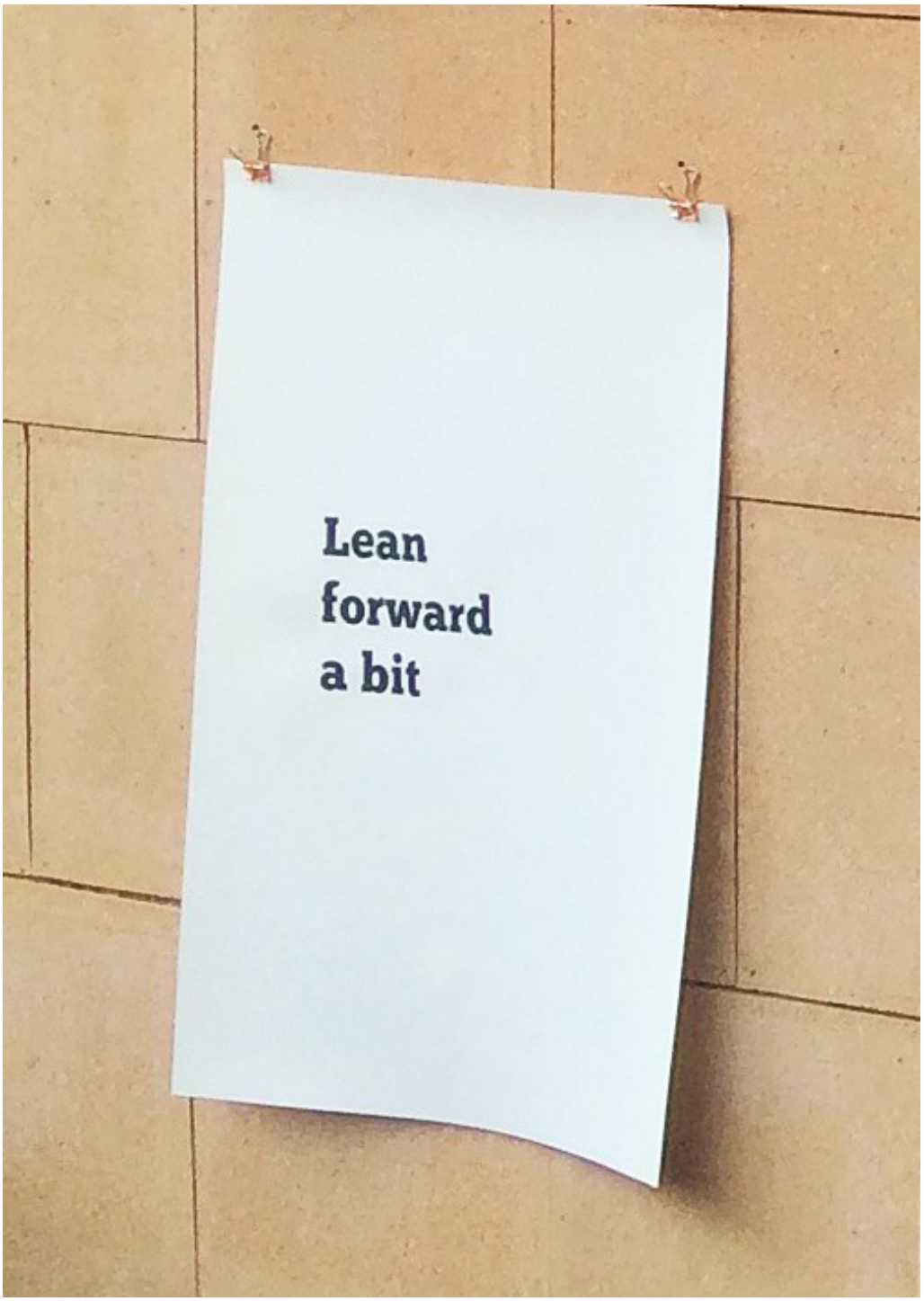

Figure 24: Scott, D. (2017) *A Space Made By Listening #4*

CHAPTER THREE:
Listening Beyond Sound Art

3.1 Overview: New Ways Of Listening In My Practice

This chapter acts a transition point between the frustrations of the previous chapter and the more expansive and generative inquiry that I conduct in Chapters Four and Five. It begins with a series of personal episodes in my research journey, related to my own work and the work of others, that all occurred in late 2014 and early 2015, two years after Open Studio and in the months subsequent to *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener?*, both discussed in the last chapter. This period marked a shift in emphasis in both my practice and in the direction of my research.

Having reached an impasse in my study of sound art's canon of listening, generated firstly by my anxiety that many of the canonical listenings I was exploring were not actually accounting for what was happening in my work, and secondly in the excitement of exploring dialogue and participatory practice as forms of listening work (see *I'm A Good Listener/Are You A Good Listener?*), I realised I could understand this deficit by accepting that the work I was making may have been 'beyond sound art' and that these participatory, inter-personal and dialogic listenings could be accounted for by a praxis of listening that was also beyond sound art. I needed to accept and give value to these aspects of my work and to hear them anew as forms of a listening art, distinct from the sound art that my work originally emerged from. I was to continue being a reflexive listening practitioner, but with a new conviction that I was working in an aesthetic realm that was no longer sound art.

Throughout this chapter and the next, I will reiterate the partiality of sound art's approach to listening, highlighting how its aesthetic is often in the tradition of modernist and postmodernist practice, so limiting its understanding of more communicative models of listening. I will also argue that it has not taken the relational or dialogical turn that other areas of contemporary art have in recent years. It is in this field of dialogical art practice that I find the theory and practice-based precedents for the types of listening praxis that I found lacking in Chapters One and Two.

This chapter begins by outlining the shift in my focus from sound art to a form of listening

practice. I then discuss areas of sound art theory and critique that emerged during this stage of my research, including texts by Ultra-Red, and publications and projects undertaken at CRiSAP, where I am a PhD candidate, all of which mount a more critical approach to listening within the discipline. I accept the influence and kinship of this work and find much value in it, but I also conclude that my study still requires further accounts of listening and further analysis of my practice of listening, beyond sound art, and beyond the scope of these texts and ideas. It is from this conclusion that I derive the title of this chapter, 'Listening Beyond Sound Art'.

3.2 Reflections On A Practice Of Listening vs. A Practice Of Sounding

Figure 25: Scott, D. (2014) *Yesterday*

In mid-2014 I wrote some reflections on the divergence of my practice from a traditional sound art practice of gallery-based artworks (Scott, 2014b and Scott, 2015d) towards more participatory modes, a process that forced a reassessment of the value of these latter works:

> Notes June 2014
>
> As my work progresses, as my practice unfolds, it moves between bases, between vectors, sometimes feeling to move between worlds. In 2014 I made an installation

exhibition work called *Yesterday*[15] for a public gallery in a stately home in Yorkshire. The work had a lot of visitors - many unassuming and accidental, wandering in whilst seeking out the house's porcelain collection. Others were invited - the Yorkshire Contemporary Arts Society, friends of Harewood House, the curator of the Wallace Collection. For most of these visits I was absent: the work had to do the talking. The solo exhibition is a strangely hollow experience, but, at the time, I still wanted more of them: creating timeless, standalone, Heath Robinson-like contraptions of pointless sounding matter: modernism. My physical presence was weakly denoted by a name on the wall - uncaring and entombed, grooved and absent. I only got to explain myself to friends or a few people on the opening. And when I did talk about it, the response was mere chatter, "Oh really?": done, dusted. My collaborator in the work Olivia Kissper was even more enigmatic: A ghostly piece of light on a film. I wanted to do an event where we talked, explained ourselves, complicated things, but our diaries didn't tie up, and Yorkshire is a long way from London when on a budget. So, we both went on with life.

This leads me to a point. After the *Yesterday* show, I had a few more exhibition-type works in the pipeline. I was excited as I love the process of researching and developing work, it's painful but always satisfying, albeit often only in hindsight. But also, slowly, slowly, a nagging thing began nagging. Alongside this work, I was doing teaching, some university work, some workshops, some participatory projects. And these strands of practice always felt separate from the kind of work outlined above. In a sense I demeaned it, 'Oh it's just some workshop stuff' or 'It's just a social project'. It always felt partial, or messy, or out of my control. Exhibitions are mini-empires: I am a tinpot-Pol Pot doing what I like, changing landscapes, weather systems, night and day, sound and light, whereas participatory projects are more like newly-forming nations: contested, chaotic, noisy, without borders, without leaders. They often disappointed me because the work didn't always do what I wanted it to do (I noted, after some time, that a forbidden part of me realised they disappointed me because, in the end, they

[15] *Yesterday* was a work about listening to objects, and objects listening back to humans. At the time I wrote about the work being concerned with a form of 'vernacular' listening. This was a notion I later abandoned within my PhD writing as my practice pushed me towards the dialogical and participatory approach discussed in this thesis. See USB file '7. Yesterday (Tingle).mp4' for the film which was the centerpiece of the exhibition. See also figure 24 for an installation view.

actually did what the participants wanted.)

> I felt a need to conjoin all this work, the gallery and the participatory, to find a way to make it all make sense. For a long time, I thought this would be through simply dropping the participatory work and moving more into the gallery world - the serious art space - but some experiences of other work sparked in me the realisation that the issue was not one of focus but one of value. I undervalued participatory work - why was this?
>
> I think I have an answer - it was (it is) because participatory work (or teaching) are so much works of listening. And listening is, historically, as Gemma Fiumara Corradi notes, a demeaned and maligned position to take. In a sense I was guilty of all the crimes I was judging others for when I began my PhD writing: I was demeaning practices of listening in favour of practices of sounding. (Scott, 2014f)

3.2.1 *The World Is Flooding* By Oreet Ashery

In summer 2014 I was working at one of my day jobs as a sound technician at Tate Modern. The job that day was setting up and mixing the sound for artist Oreet Ashery in a performance of *The World Is Flooding*, a version of Vladimir Mayakovsky's play *The Mystery Bouffe* (1918/1921), directed by Ashery and developed and performed in collaboration with Freedom From Torture (Write to Life group), the UK Lesbian & Gay Immigration Group and Portugal Prints. *The World Is Flooding* was performed on July 12th, 2014 in the Turbine Hall (see figure 26). The piece was novel as it was co-written and performed by the participants. Ashery writes in her notes on the exhibition:

> Mayakovsky introduces a provision stating that in the future anyone can present the play, providing that they make it contemporary, immediate, up to the moment. In an act of faith, he creates a de-authorising contract with the future – no official licensing needed – trusting that at any point in time an urgent sociopolitical moment would be foregrounded. (Ashery, 2014)

Figure 26: Ashery, O. (2014) *The World Is Flooding*

The text for the piece was constructed from lines written by the participants, who were all representing marginalised and under-heard groups within society and talked of their life experiences. These lines were performed by other members of the group - destabilising the authorship of the script and creating poignant moments of difference and alterity where texts describing the experience of black lesbian were read by a Moroccan man, or lines describing experiences of racism were read by a white, apparently middle-class woman. Around these lines were more absurdist sections from Mayakovsky's script, describing the tribulations of an Inuit who puts their finger in the ground and opened up the earth, creating a great flood:

> An Eskimo sticks a finger in the ground and discovers a hole, a flood, a super duper crisis.
> Do not think badly of the Eskimo, do not blame them or punish them
> They have not created the flood,
> Neither did they make it happen, nor were they the cause of it in any way
> All they did was to discover the flood and inform the world about it.
> (Mayakovsky/Ashery, 2014)

The latter text operates as a metaphor for the process at play in the development of *The World Is Flooding*. In a sense, Ashery is the Inuit, and it's not her finger that opens up the hole, bringing in the super duper crisis, it is her listening. By working with participants, by hearing their stories and allowing them a voice within a performance, it is the space

opened up by her listening in which the piece was conceived. Ashery did not 'cause the flood'. Through her listening, she was able to 'discover the flood and inform the world about it'. Due to its reliance on 'the urgent sociopolitical moment', one that can only be mediated and spoken by those who exist in that contemporary moment, the piece demands a rigorous, open and immediate listening. This fact of a listener being present to receive the experiences presented in the final work was quite tangible in the performance. The performers opened up to Ashery, they had spoken in the presence of an enveloping and supportive listening. The genuineness and intimacy were palpable amidst the banners, music and movement. Ashery was not a physical presence in the work itself, but the work was predicated first on her listening, and then on the listening within the group - one that heard each other's experiences and, upon doing so, was able to then re-voice them to new ears. Ashery's work was inspiring in its beauty as a final work and in its generous and dialogical genesis. It made me consider the possibility that I needed to be in the work more as a living listening body, as a musician is, as a comedian is, as an actor is, as a fine artist often isn't: as a listener, and as a speaker.

During early 2015 I was working on various projects, works I won't go into great detail on within this thesis but which act as signposts on where my praxis was heading, and how it continued to be rooted in listening, not sound.

2.3 *Liberation Through Hearing*: A One-Way Conversation

Around the same time as I saw the Ashery work, I was developing a piece for a phone box in Piccadilly near the Royal Academy. The piece was commissioned by the curatorial agency Measure and was part of a series of works made by artists (the other artists being Aura Satz, Holly Pester and Laurence Abu Hamdan) responding to Gilbert Scott's red telephone box (see figure 28), a Grade One Listed structure and the first telephone box of its kind (now ubiquitous across the British Isles). *Liberation Through Hearing* (Scott, 2015e) was to be heard in the phone box by dialling a freephone number and listening through the handset[16]. The work was about the relationship between early telephony and spiritualism and was composed as an 'endless' on-hold phone system, with on-hold music played by myself and ARCO, a new music ensemble, with various snatches of text taken

[16] Listen to USB file '8. Liberation Through Hearing Excerpt.wav' for an excerpt of the piece. The final version ran to six hours, with audiences only expected to listen to a fragment during any one hearing.

from spiritualist manuals, ethnography, early phone manuals and other sources, read by a voice actor in the style of an on-hold voiceover (see figure 27 for a graphic image accompanying the work). The work was a closed system, a modernist sound art work that existed with or without an audience.

Figure 27: Scott, D. (2015) *Liberation Through Hearing*

Simon Day, one of the curators, made an interesting observation during our early conversations about the work. He remarked that one of the reasons they asked me to do the piece was because they saw me talking about my work at Soundfjord Gallery, in February 2013, and found me engaging and interesting as a speaker. I took this compliment as humbly as I could and said that any enjoyment was no doubt something to do with him, and others present at Soundfjord, being engaging and interested as listeners, as much as me being a good speaker. His comment stuck with me. Ironically, an irony that works as a fitting analog to this interlude on practice, *Liberation Through Hearing* was a one-sided phone call - a recorded message. This was necessary as the technology the curators supplied only allowed for a recorded message, but it seemed fitting: the piece was absolutely non-dialogical. Whilst I felt the work operated successfully as a stand-alone sound art work, it seemed like an analog for the limits of sound art's listening: sound art was about an artist making something for a listener whereas I was interested in listening *to*, and *with* my audience, not them listening to me.

Figure 28: Scott, D. (2015) *Liberation Through Hearing (Phonebox)*

3.2.3 Magic Me's *Speak As You Find*: Conversation As Practice

During 2015, I was the resident sound artist for a performance work devised by Magic Me, a theatre company specialising in intergenerational performance. The project was entitled *Speak As You Find*[17] and was a promenade theatre performance co-devised with thirty women and children who lived in the borough of Tower Hamlets (see figure 29). It was directed by Sue Mayo, with assistance from Raj Bhari (see Scott, 2015c). During the project I interviewed residents of the borough for an oral history archive, and also created small sound installations that audiences moved between during the performance. The event culminated in a Community Conversation,[18] a model of interaction where audiences become participants and discuss issues emerging from the preceding performance, mediated by conversation facilitators. The notion of the conversation as an artwork in itself, something I'd touched on in the *I'm A Good Listener…* event, was exciting and inspirational.

17 For details of the project see https://magicme.co.uk/rooms/#performance

18 A technique derived from Laura Chasin who developed the Public Conversations Project in the USA in in 1989.

Figure 29: Magic Me. (2015) *Speak As You Find*

So, instead of dropping the participatory practices I decided to do the opposite. I decided to show them with value, to talk them up, and to discuss them as serious undertakings. I began to sense that there was a whole practice of listening outside of sound art, one that could still be informed by the ways of listening explored in the first part of my research, but that embraced methodologies and specialisms that, as yet, had not been adequately dealt with by sound art. My work evolved considerably during this time, and during 2014 and 2015 I undertook projects that seemed at a remove from sound art, but which still required a careful and considered listening. I was to begin to map out a practice of listening beyond sound art.

3.3 A Listening Deficit Within Sound Art

Even though I felt my work was moving beyond sound art, I still sought out accounts of listening from within the discipline. I wanted to remain in dialogue with the field that my work had emerged from. Whilst I felt there was a listening practice beyond sound art, and that sound art's listenings were partial and problematic, I also felt that sound art had, thus far, been attempting to articulate its listening far more critically and deeply than any other artistic discipline. Moreover, during this period of my research, theorists and practitioners within sound art were beginning to ask similar questions of listening as I was, seeking to address its social, political and non-sounding aspects, for example. This resulted in a more

critical approach to listening more generally within the discipline, one that I welcomed and absorbed into my practice. We will explore some of these ideas below.

3.3.1 Neo-Modernist And Post-Modernist Sound Art

Sound art discourse has mirrored debates within fine art about the differences between modernist and post-modernist perspectives on aesthetics, and this has consequences with regards approaches to listening. Two texts exemplify this discourse and here I reflect on these consequences with regards the trajectory of my own research and development of my listening practice.

Christoph Cox's short essay 'Neo-modernist Sound Art' (2003), originally published in Artforum, both outlines and exemplifies a tendency in sound art practice of the early twenty-first century to reassert principles of modernism first proposed by Clement Greenberg and Theodor Adorno in the middle of the twentieth century. I will summarise and reflect on the essay here and then contrast it with the writing of Seth Kim-Cohen, whose 2010 book *In The Blink Of An Ear: Non-Cochlear Sound Art,* offers a response to this 'sound-in-itself' position.

The canonical works of sound practice occupy relatively unproblematically modernist spaces. Works such Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting In A Room* (1969), or Bernhard Leitner's *Soundcube* (1969), whilst inviting interaction and movement beyond that normally afforded in a seated concert hall, still exist as things to be discovered, operating with or without the audience's hearing. Cox draws on that tradition with his conception of neo-modernist sound art, and asserts the particular politics of such work:

> To the postmodernist, the new sound art might seem to retreat from social and political concerns. But neo-modernism has a politics of its own - a distinctly avant-gardist one that recalls both Greenberg and Theodor Adorno and implicitly criticises postmodernism for its symbiotic relationship with the culture industry. In eschewing mass-media content, the genre proposes a more radical exploration of the formal conditions of the medium itself. Against the anaesthetic assault of daily life, it reclaims a basic function of art: the affirmation and extension of pure sensation. Where postmodernism is about mixture and overload, neo-modernism is about purity and reduction. Where postmodernism is about content and the concrete (the vertiginous string of recognisable samples), neo-modernism is about

form and abstraction (p.67).

Cox describes works by Ryoji Ikeda - 'patterns of interference with simple sine tones' (ibid.) - and Carsten Nicolai - 'spare loops out of crystalline ticks and beeps' (ibid.). Such works place the listener in the role of receiver: admiring and being transformed by the sounding artwork.

I suggest the politics Cox's speaks of is not one that aggravates or affects at the level of the social body, nor is it work that proposes alternatives to capitalist sensory modes. Rather it's a politic that remains individualist and symbolic. And that is fine - my thesis does not discredit the affective power, at the individual level, of modernist or neo-modernist informed practices. Rather I suggest that the existence of what Cox calls 'neo-modernist' sound practices allows us to mark out another, separate territory, one that doesn't engage with just form but with other people. It's a sonically-informed space that puts listening, and not the construction of sound, at its centre. Its audience is not uninformed or partial without an engagement with the art object, but rather, they are enablers, collaborators and aggravators themselves.

In contrast to this return-to-form explored by Cox[19], Seth Kim-Cohen sets out an alternative proposition and offers an indirect response to Cox, one that again rehearses the modernist/post-modernist dialectic. Kim-Cohen argues that much sound art portrays sound as 'sound-in-itself'; as an object that can, apparently, exist without an audience or context and operate in the grand tradition of the modernist art object (*as per* Cox's neo-modernist sound works). Playfully engaging with Duchamp's proposition of a non-retinal art, an idea that has since been seen as a seminal moment in the development of what in the 1960s became known as conceptual art, Kim-Cohen argues powerfully for a move away from sound-in-itself which he views as a modernist hangover - neo- or otherwise - and instead for an embrace of what he calls the non-cochlear; that is aspects of sound art works that are not audible but operate at the level of the conceptual or the symbolic. The notion of sound having meaning without reference to anything but the sound itself – the vibrations of air molecules, discussed in terms of timbre, pitch, density, spectromorphology is, according to Kim-Cohen, analogous to the attitudes towards paint and colour within Abstract Expressionism and is inherently tied to Greenbergian notions

19 Cox has developed this position further over the past decade. See 'Beyond Representation and Signification: Towards a Sonic Materialism' (2011), as an example.

of the art object, notions that the visual arts has been much quicker to move beyond than sound art. According to Kim-Cohen, in the visual arts this reductionism was subsequently challenged by conceptualism and post-modernism, which highlighted the complex network of relationships, ideas and trajectories around an artwork, giving it meaning, or acting as the artwork itself. These notions destabilised the autonomy of the art object and uncovered contingencies and complexities that undermined modernist notions of purity, singularity or authorship. Kim-Cohen argues a similar development has not occurred as explicitly in sound arts, with sound still shying away from analysis and claiming some inherent essence, so hindering a potential conceptualist space within the medium.

Kim-Cohen's text seemed to take sound art beyond the phenomenology-inspired, neo-modernist sublimity, and it also outlines a notion of an 'expanded sonic practice' that includes 'the spectator, who always carries, as constituent parts of his or her subjectivity, a perspective shaped by social, political, gender, class and racial experience' (p.107) but it fell short of dealing with listening, especially in the social sense that I was interested in. Kim-Cohen's listening is not phenomenological, but it is cerebral; it's listening to sound as conceptual art. For Kim-Cohen non-cochlear sound art is a series of signs and symbols, and listening, if indeed listening is required, consists of a 'reading' these symbols and signs. There is still little space for dialogue or communication.

Much sound art still occupies Cox's 'neo-modernist' space, a position that forecloses any possibility of the socially-engaged, participatory and communicative kind of listening I was becoming interested in. Moreover, Kim-Cohen's post-modern, non-cochlear sound art renders listening (and even sound) to a secondary role in an approach that mutes the sensuality and intimacy of the listening encounter.

3.4 Recent Listenings Within Sound Art: Finding The Boundaries Of My Inquiry

The act of listening itself is not foregrounded in Kim-Cohen or Cox's formulations. Neither seemed to address the dialogical, conversational or communicative listening I was seeking to understand and develop. Since these texts from the late 2000s and early 2010s, further texts and projects have emerged that seek to expand sound art's understanding of its own listening. With the explosion in Sound Studies as a distinct field, and the opening up sound to feminist, queer and other critiques, a healthy field of listening studies has sprung up in recent years.

One strategy within this field has been to go beyond sound art to find accounts and practices of listening that exist in other, non-art or non-aesthetic, disciplines as a means of informing the discipline. Two projects based at CRiSAP, where I am conducting this PhD, exemplify this. The book *On Listening* (2013), edited by Cathy Lane and Angus Carlyle, and Salomé Voegelin's ongoing project Listening Across Disciplines both draw on a wider field of sound and listening studies to expand the musical, and phenomenology-derived listenings collected in the canonical texts of the first decade of the 2000s.

3.4.1 Listening Across Disciplines

Listening Across Disciplines has a broad remit and ambitious aims, encompassing practices of listening across a range of academic and professional disciplines, with sound art, and the arts in general, being one strand of a multi-disciplinary approach to sound and listening. The project website states:

> The issues under investigation are:
> • The scholarly and public understanding of listening as a skill and methodology
> • The discipline-specific applications of listening and how they can be shared
> • The analytical, data-gathering and diagnostic function of listening compared across the disciplines
> • The legitimacy and evaluation of the heard for the arts and humanities and for science and technology disciplines
> • The role of listening in the transfer of results and outcomes to other researchers, professionals and a general public. (Listening Across Disciplines, 2017)

These ambitions are exciting and radical and resonate strongly with my own ideas about listening being a transformative, useful and skilled activity. Yet, I found a gap between the kind of practice I was developing in projects like Open Studio, or, even, more abstractly, in a work like *Liberation Through Hearing*, and the listening discussed in Listening Across Disciplines. I was beginning to seek an account of listening via the particular strand of participatory art practice that I was working in. This listening was a form of art practice, distinct from sound art, which operated outside of the gallery, and involved people. This listening was intimate and ambiguous: it was human-sized. It was not the listening of data gathering and diagnostics, nor of transferring 'results and outcomes'. It was operating within an aesthetic and artistic territory. It was not, and is not, trans-, or

inter-, disciplinary.

I attended a Listening in Disciplines seminar on listening and the environment, and whilst the presentations were interesting and fulfilled the project's ambitions to include listening practices from across disciplines (presentations included Bill Chaplin discussing the sound of stars and Sabine von Fischer on the history of acoustics), I found the approach less relevant to the concerns of my research project. I was very curious about the format of the session, which was in a traditional 'lecture-followed-by-a-Q-and-A' mode. The listening was often unilateral and any dialogue was an addendum and felt rushed. Ultimately it felt like lots of people talking about listening, rather than enacting its potentials[20].

The event also happened on the morning after the Brexit vote, and it was clear many people in the room were distracted by that. Opinions on Brexit felt to me to be something worth listening to, yet, for understandable reasons, the event had to proceed as planned. These conversations happened during the coffee break, often the moment when the most interesting chats occur at academic events. This created, for me, a disjuncture between the listening being spoken about, and the listening that perhaps many in the room needed to engage in. I wrote a response to the session which highlighted my desire to 'humanise' the listening being discussed, and to ask who it was for, and to whom, and for whom, it was listening:

> I've been thinking on the various listenings discussed during the sessions last week. In the fallout of the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom, there are many calls for a careful listening to occur.
>
> I was thinking about how the strategies employed to listen to a star, or to a building, might be utilised in this sticky situation. I also thought that we should interrogate this tendency, after moments of great upheaval, to demand listening.
>
> Three questions could be asked:
>
> What does this call for listening seek to enact?

[20] See http://www.listeningacrossdisciplines.net/podcasts/#environment for podcasts of each of the presenters discussing their work.

What forms of listening does it actually require or demand?
Who is granted permission to listen and to hear?

I wondered, is this listening intended to cure, or at least ease, the ailment? To speak, and be properly listened to, helps overcome the problem that is spoken of. The listening acts to create a curative space, one where grievances are aired and somehow laundered, where, through utterance and articulation of the issue at stake, self-realisation is achieved and painful contradictions are resolved. This is the listening of the psychiatrist's couch or the confession booth. It requires full disclosure.

I thought, are we listening for symptoms? A listening that sits in the realm of the curative but moves agency from the speaker to the one who is listening. Here the listener listens out for symptoms, but the listening itself does not cure. This is the listening of the stethoscope, the listening of the underwater sonar and the listening of the government sociologist, or the data-mining algorithms of the social media analyst. This listening seeks to hear patterns and trends: loci of mass or density. It's the listening of sonification where individual subjectivities are understood only in relation to those louder or quieter, milder or stronger, than the next. It's a listening of averages and multiples.

I considered another listening that may be not intended to cure, but simply to allow voice: to listen and not jump to meaning, to hear with a compassionate intensity. This is a listening that exists in the resonant space between interlocuters, it is a non-judgemental listening space that scholar Maggi Michel calls a 'folk listening' space, one that operates with the maxim, 'take what you like, leave the rest.'

I thought that sometimes we may listen to just revel in the otherness of certain voices, or in the music of the vernacular: cadences of rage, pity, humiliation or shame. This is an aesthetic mode, one that seeks neither meaning, causes or cures, remaining instead in the space of resonance and resisting the dialogical impulses of the sort listed above. This listening aggregates in the concert hall, the theatre, around the television or radio. It renders the radical or reactionary voice as one that sings and is not answered. This listening hears from afar. It hears the blues as music and the howl of the refugee as news. It can be catharsis, but it can also

be a means of avoidance.

> I speculated on who should be doing this listening: who is authorised to speak and who is authorised to hear? Listening is a tool of power and it can be evoked by power as a salve, but it can also operate as a blanket, smothering dialog instead of provoking it. The listener has no obligation to hear or to understand. To leave listening to a power with its own agenda is to risk hearing nothing. Moreover, listening alone can be more a strategy to capture and keep utterance hostage, to bind it in the tape of dictaphones, or to abandon it to the anonymity of the archive, instead of being a strategy to open up free and safe spaces of togetherness. Rarely are subjects invited to listen dialogically with their leaders. The leaders rarely, if ever, speak to the confessionary or curative ear of their subjects, perhaps only when they are on the ropes and requiring forgiveness, like Richard Nixon in 1974, or, less dramatically, Nick Clegg in 2012. Leaders demand to be heard and understood and tarry little in listening, preferring to jump to the fixed certainties of policy, pledge, law or command. Subjects are spoken to, rather than asked to listen. When employed as a rhetorical strategy, the phrase, "Just listen to me" can be a sign of desperation, a mark of weakness, the last gasp of a losing argument.
>
> Returning to stars, and listening to stars, may provide us with a suitably unworldly and transcendent form of listening that offers alternatives. By hearing the vibratory mass of humanity, breathing in and out, we may understand more deeply the various forms, densities, weights of human experience. We may hear each person as a star, a bounded unit of heat and chaos and balance and complexity. But we may also consider how the star hears us. The five-minute oscillation of the celestial breath operates as much as a metaphor of sound, and of listening, as something concrete and audible. So, extending this poetry, the singing star could also be imagined as one that has the agency to listen. Perhaps that oscillation is a response to what has been heard. Perhaps we are in a conversation with that star, opened up by our listening to it. (Scott, 2016d)

I posted this response on the Listening Across Disciplines Facebook page and received a few cursory 'likes'. The only written comment was a positive response from educator and writer Nicole Brittingham Furlonge whose work I had been writing about at the time (see Chapter Five, p. 163). She expressed great sympathy with my words, and I was encouraged that they resonated with her, as I had found

much in her writing that was relevant to this study.

This text, perhaps in a more poetic than academic mode, highlighted the difference in approaches between my own small projects, and the grander sweep of Listening Across Disciplines. Moreover, it highlighted my concern that the sociality of listening, between people rather than between people and objects, is often overlooked. I return always to the intimate, human-scale listening of my work. I concede that Listening Across Disciplines takes a far broader sweep than my study - I am still wholly concerned with listening within artistic practice. I don't close my ears to listening beyond all art, but I always return it to practice.

3.4.2 *On Listening*

Cathy Lane and Angus Carlyle's edition *On Listening*, published in late 2013 offers another multi-disciplinary perspective on listening. The text begins from a similar ground to this study, noting the theorists we have discussed in the previous chapter. The editors write how it:

> builds on the considerable contributions made by composers and musicians including John Cage, Pierre Schaeffer, R. Murray Schafer and Pauline Oliveros; on the theoretical writings of Don Ihde and Jean-Luc Nancy; and on the more recent books Listening to Noise and Silence and Sinister Resonance by our colleagues Salomé Voegelin and David Toop (p.1).

Many of the texts in the book exist in the same climate as my work and in many ways this study is both borne of the same concerns that listening is under-theorised with the discipline. The book features an inspiring and broad range of listening practices, from artistic to sociological to therapeutic and beyond. Like Listening Across Disciplines, *On Listening* proposes listening as a rich seam for academic study and offers a cross-disciplinary model of how to approach this study. With regards to my study, I was drawn to texts in the book that maintained an interest in listening as an artistic practice, particularly the short text by composer and musician Sarha Moore. In her interrogation of performing, 'the Listener is the Artist', she writes:

> As listeners we then create meaning. We cannot know all the meanings given to a musical work by its creators and we may or may not care about this. Is it possible

> to listen and enjoy in an ethical way with a desire, not to 'understand' the music but to 'be here now'? (Moore, 2013)

Interestingly, Moore is here referring both to the audience and the performer: 'we' being both her and her listener; a small community of listeners allowing a sound to happen. This is a participatory mode of listening. This is also an instance of an artist discussing their own listening when actually creating, as opposed to when auditing, work, and offers a glimpse of the 'listening artist' at work: a practitioner for whom listening is a conscious endeavour and for whom the listening of an audience is something that can be opened up, challenged and shared. Yet it was a listening still rooted in music, and I wanted to find listening beyond music, and beyond sound art.

On Listening offered me kinship and solidarity in its faith in listening as a discrete subject of inquiry, but I sought to understand listening as an artistic practice beyond sound art, my endeavour had a speculative and practice-led motivation that was not summative or seeking to taking-stock, but was instead (and still is now) open-ended and messy. So, in this spirit, I needed to find alternative accounts, and develop my understanding of listening more deeply, and with the caveat that this may result in failure.

3.4.3 Relational vs. Dialogic Listening

Other artists had also written on listening and begun to develop alternative schemas that dealt with the canon of listening that has emerged in sound art. Lawrence English is a widely renowned sound artist and researcher based in Brisbane, Australia. His work deals with the politics of perception and the nature of listening and he works across field recording, music and sound installation. He opens up space of listening in his article 'Relational Listening: The Politics Of Perception' (2012) that, like the projects discussed above, has much affinity to my own project. English notes the limitations of applying the canonical ways of listening as described or proposed by Chion, Schaeffer, Murray Schafer et al. In this regard he seemed to arrive at similar conclusions to my own at the close of the last chapter. English proposes that the listening of the sound artist is not only simple physics, or physiognomy, but also the result of active engagement in theories and methodologies of listening. He notes how 'the listener becomes a performer in place, amplifying and refocusing temporal and spatial phenomena not merely through physiological means, but also via active theoretical and methodological frameworks' (p.3). Here English's listener echoes my own practice described in Chapter One, moving

through modes and strategies, seeking what works in that particular moment and context of listening.

English realises that a reduction of listening to mere modes - semi-physiological responses that move us mindlessly between casual listening and semantic listening, or wildly into reduced listening - only partially describe the truly creative listening undertaken by anyone consciously working with sound. English references Peter Szendy's challenge 'make a listening listened to' (which I discussed in Chapter One) and writes about Chion's modes of listening:

> When considering Chion's modes of listening, for example, relational listening exceeds or perhaps exists above of the causal, semantic and reduced modes. It asks the transmitting listener to aspire to a meta-position, one that pushes beyond any functional listening to transcends the moment in favour of transmission in another place and another time. (p.3)

English's relational listening describes a unilateral relationship to a sound object - first of the maker to the object, and then of the listener to the object. It deals with the listening that occurs when the maker is making; when she is listening in that present moment of creation, with a simultaneous ear on the future moment of reception. This artist-listener is present in the future moment of listening via phantasmagoric projection into the imagined ear of the future listener - impressive and transcendent, yes, but also imagined and only ever immaterial to the future listener. Yet I found limits to English's model of relational listening with regards it efficacy to my project. His invitation to open up listening and to endorse its relational nature is welcome, but it also concerns itself only with a particular link in the signal-chain of sound/listening, focussing on different listeners relationships to a separate and distinct sound-object. It doesn't describe a dialogue between listeners, nor the listening occurring during that dialogue, and this dialogic listening, rather than just a relational listening, I realised, is what my work increasingly needed to understand and uncover.

The shift in adjective: relational to dialogic, may seem like a mere consultation of Roget's Thesaurus but each word has a different history, and offer very different steers on where such practices would end up. The listening that much of my work entailed is dialogical, not relational, and the subtleties of that difference will be discussed in the next chapter. What I developed between 2015 and 2017 is both the notion of a listening artist and that

the particular type of listening art I was mostly engaged in was, often, a social art. This consciously echoed a broader turn in contemporary art practice towards the dialogical, the social and the participatory, which I will explore in depth in the following chapter.

3.4.4 Michael Gallagher And Community Listening

During 2013 geographer Michael Gallagher and artist Mark Peter Wright collaborated on a number of performative works and discussions. I was taken with Gallagher's interpretation of Wright's comments that listening 'is a multi-sensory, multidimensional form of attentive experience, a messy mingling of self and world' (2013); a notion that Gallagher takes as a hope that sound art can navigate between a musical understanding of listening, which privileges sound and negates the social, and a semantic listening that privileges meaning over the more sensual aspects of aurality. On a blog post he lays out some of his own strategies of listening, including affective, associative and embodied listening, but perhaps the most relevant comment to my own study are his calls for a more collective listening: 'The kinds of listening I've been more enthused by lately have been set up to have more collective, participatory effects' (ibid.). He cites James Wyness' 'soond gaitherin' as an example; a simple yet powerful event where the artist invites a group to be together, listen to sound recordings and socialise.

In his contribution to the book *On Listening* (2013), Gallagher also highlights the propensity in sound praxis to always portray listening as a 'good thing'. He notes how listening is also appropriated and misused by power, noting that 'if sound enacts power, then so must listening' (p.43). Criticising David Cameron's 2012 'listening exercise' that claimed to want to hear the United Kingdom's views on the NHS for being more of a sop than a genuine consultation (p.41), he also raises the possibility that even sound art's listening could be engaged in oppressive ways:

> Pauline Oliveros presents her deep listening techniques as a means of developing a greater awareness of oneself as part of the sounding world. Yet in the hands of military institutions or 'intelligence' agencies, deep listening might produce very different results. (p.43)

Whilst the latter proposition may seem melodramatic (can one imagine CIA operatives using free improvisation as an interrogation technique?), Gallagher's voice is one of a growing number of scholars seeking to critique a too rose-tinted view of listening. We will

discuss this more in Chapter Four, in relation to both Gallagher's work and the writing of Justine Lloyd.

3.4.5 Ultra-Red: *Five Protocols For Listening* (2013)

It is perhaps in the work of sound art collective Ultra-Red that I find most satisfying articulation within sound art of the listening I was moving towards within my practice. Formed in the mid-90s by Don Rhine and Marco Larsen, and now a collective numbering ten, much of their early work was connected to AIDS activism. They now work across Europe and America conducting what they term 'militant sound investigations'. Yet they also recognise how listening is its own form of practice. Indeed, I recently (February 2017) talked with Ultra-Red member Chris Jones at an event at Open School East in Margate about my research and he remarked in our conversation how Ultra-Red's work had become more and more about listening and less and less about sound.

We will return now to the introduction to their pamphlet *Five Protocols for Listening* (2013), referenced at the beginning of Chapter One, which called sound art's ways of listening 'protocols for listening [that] gave priority to transforming auditory perceptions' (p.2). Later in the pamphlet, more pertinently to this stage of my research, Ultra-Red go on to offer a critique of these twentieth-century listenings and offer a wonderfully condensed version of what I spend much of the previous two chapters outlining: 'Listening, however, stopped short of taking action to transform the world one perceives' (ibid.). Many of the canonical listenings I explored in the last chapter, whilst seeking to lead an audience to new ways of hearing the world, did not seek to enact any change in that world.

Ultra-Red go on to note how a counter-discourse of 'improvised listening' exists, one that operates against just the transformation of sensory percepts enacted by modernist sound art and seeks to engender collective practices where 'listening enacts solidarity and dialogue' (ibid.). They do not refute the necessity for strategies or protocols to encourage the proper listening for a given situation, recognising that listening is 'never natural. It requires and generates literacy' (p.4), but they do concede that these methods are as dialogically and contextually-contingent as any outcomes that are generated by them: 'the form and content of the procedure becomes embedded in concrete historical conditions and material circumstances that cannot be presumed' (p.5). So, in contexts where people are both listeners and listened-to, any rigid models such as reduced listening, or approaches such as deep listening, risk fetishising the mode or strategy of listening over

the imperative to communicate and be-with-people in that moment.

Ultra-Red offer a veiled critique of how the ways of listening of sound art, born of a modernist avant-garde, can ignore the contingent and collectively-informed aspect of listening, arguing that 'without that dialectic listening procedures can fall dangerously into rigid formalism or aesthetic experience for its own sake' (p.4). I have sympathy for this position. In my Open Studio I was aware of seeking to present work that felt 'finished', in the modernist sense of having an ability to exist without an audience, and, as I discussed, this particular aesthetic paradigm seemed to work against other more participatory or dialogical dynamics at play in the work.

Ultra-Red offered me an example of a listening practice that was both participatory and socially-engaged, and also informed by, and in dialogue with, sound art practice. Ultra-Red's work has much more of an activist position, one that was entirely absent in my work for Open Studio, but I suggest that both feature a listening that is beyond formalism and the procedural, manifesting more within the interaction of people at the moment of reception and dialogue. It is a listening that contributes to the forming of a group: be it a family, or a community. It an approach that reduces the starkness of a mode or strategy, recognising them as tools to be used when useful or relevant, but not to be fetishised or essentialised.

3.5 Conclusion And Next Steps

This chapter represents a space for breath within this study. After the problems and frustrations I discussed in the previous chapter I needed to reassess the parameters of my research. I needed to dig deeper into the contemporaneous listenings of sound art (as of 2014) and also reassess the focus of my own practice.

I still felt there was a gap in my accounting for the listening operating in my work. Whilst the ideas outlined above seemed to be in the same orbit as my work, I knew there was still a means of getting closer to that, as yet, amorphous and undefined listening that seemed at the centre of much of the work I discussed in Chapter Two.

This realignment of my research objectives, moving beyond a scoping out of sound art's canon of listening (ascertaining its relevance to my practice) and towards mapping out a new practice of listening (what I saw as the practice of a listening artist, not a sound artist)

occurred just after I submitted my confirmation document to the University of the Arts. This milestone allowed me this pause for thought and, in hand with the experiences working with Magic Me, Oreet Ashery and the two exhibition works *Yesterday* and *Liberation Through Hearing*, pushed me to the realisation that I needed to search further afield for answers, beyond sound art. I was still building on the listening praxis that sound art had provided me with, and perhaps I was pushing the boundaries of sound art outwards a little, rather than inventing a whole new type of practice, but either way, my mission had shifted. This was a very exciting time because instead of the somewhat summative endeavour of collating and analysing existing listening practices, as I had begun to do with my collection of canonical listenings, I was now venturing into a new territory of listening, where these existing practices were tools in a larger undertaking. I knew this was, or would be, an original contribution to knowledge.

In the following chapter I will explore in depth this form of approach, and, to that end, I will discuss two works that are not recognisably sound art but which feature a deep and prolonged listening. I do this to scope out approaches and accounts of listening beyond sound art that still operate as art and aesthetic practice. I will also continue the reflexive critique of a modernist, atomist listening explored in this chapter and the previous one.

Figure 30: Scott, D. (2017) *A Space Made By Listening #5*

CHAPTER FOUR

Listening in Dialogue: *We Know What We Like and We Like What We Know* and *Spaceship School*

4.1 Overview

At this stage in my research I leave sound art behind, and I explore two projects that sit in the realm of socially-engaged art. They contain dialogue, object making, space-making, workshops, documentary and, I concede, some sound too. But underlying all this is listening, a listening between people, and of people to their social, built and natural environments. These are a human-scale listenings, often intimate and always within dialogue. In Chapter Five I will articulate the position that an artist can take to work in this way, but for this chapter I will take us through these ideas via practice, and through the process by which I began to articulate this practice. I explore dialogical art practice, and a dialogic listening, via a close analysis of the project *We Know What We Like And We Like What We Know* (Scott and Scott, 2014c), made in collaboration with Trish Scott, and I then expand this notion of dialogic listening with input from Jacques Rancière's writing on dissensus, critical art and art as encounter, via another piece of practice entitled *Spaceship School* (Scott and Scott, 2015a). Neither project is a work of sound art, but both required a developed practice of listening.

These projects featured much speculation in their framing of listening as a central method and aesthetic. I did not have complete confidence in this approach when developing the works, and my articulation of these works as the works of a 'listening artist' is perhaps only now, at the of writing in 2017, possible, due to my confidence and understanding of such a position. When I was making these projects that notion was nascent and vulnerable.

4.2 *We Know What We Like And We Like What We Know:* 'To Open Up A Space By Listening'

It was in the spirit of listening as dialogue that I began developing the project *We Know What We Like And We Like What We Know*, made in collaboration with Trish Scott and funded by a small grant from the Swale-based arts initiative Ideas Test (see figure 31 for our initial invitation). Whilst the work was collaborative, utilising Trish's skills and

expertise in documentation, socially-engaged practice and visual art, the listening aspect was theorised and attended to by me, and I used the project as a test-ground for the concepts developed in the past two chapters and as a case study for the listening I was seeking to account for and develop.

Figure 31: Scott, D. (2014) *We Know What We Like and We Like What Know (Invitation Poster)*

Run in Swale in 2014, the project gave three households across the borough the

opportunity to commission an artist to make an artwork especially for their home[1]. In a text about the project written for the Chelsea Camberwell and Wimbledon Graduate School (Trish was undertaking a PhD at Chelsea School of Art during this time) blog we wrote:

> Bringing together their research interests on dialogical encounters and the archive (Trish) and artistic listening strategies (Dan) the project involved setting up a situation in which three households in Swale, Kent selected and co-commissioned a contemporary artist to make a bespoke work for their home. The production process was underpinned by constant discussion and negotiation, with artists responding to resident's own interests and ideas on art. In bringing artists, and (non) audiences together in this way Scott and Scott used a dialogical approach to explore ideas around art and taste, mediated via the making of particular works. (Scott and Scott, 2014)

The project culminated in a listening event at the Whitstable Biennale where the participants and an audience of the general public listened to interviews with all the participants on radios. We also published a pamphlet featuring essays and interviews with all the participants[2].

Whilst the project was not oral history *per se*, we were focused on uncovering opinions and experiences of contemporary art, from both artists and households, and this required us to open up a space of listening via conversation. This constant process of dialogue, documentation and reflection was a central thread of *We Know What We Like* and each part of the process of generating and making each artwork was attended to and recorded by myself and Trish.

This project was the first I developed after the shift in focus from sound work to listening outlined above occurred. Whereas in 2012 I would have viewed this project as something separate from my sound art work, in 2014 I approached the piece as a work of listening, and a work that had sensibilities derived from my study of listening within sound art. The results of the project, made by the three artists selected by the households, included a sculpture (see figure 37), a market stall (see figure 36) and a 2D canvas (see figure 34), but

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1 The selected artists were Rosalie Schweiker, Alastair Levy and Alicja Rogalska.

2 See appendix file 'We Know What We Like book.pdf'

all had emerged from a series of dialogues underscored by a careful listening.

Listening's role within this project was generative. It opened up a communicative territory, allowing speech a hearing, and, after opening this space, remaining there as an atmosphere: a necessary holding space. I suggest again, *pace* Corradi Fiumara and Lipari, that this simple fact of listening being a necessary and central part of dialogue is one often overlooked, under-heard and poorly understood. Alessandra Portelli, professor of Anglo-American literature at the University of Rome La Sapienza, and a renowned oral historian, writes eloquently on the nature of the space in his discussion of listening in oral history practices. He notes in the opening paragraphs of the essay that 'oral history, then, is primarily a listening art' and speaks of the space-making qualities of listening:

> The historian has a responsibility to open up a narrative space by listening actively to what the narrator has to tell. As opposed to the majority of historical documents, in fact, oral sources are not found, but co-created by the historian. They would not exist in this form without the presence, and stimulation, the active role of the historian in the field interview. (2011, p.6)

Reading Portelli in 2014 I was inspired by his description of listening having the ability to create a space. I began to consider how different ways of listening might create different kinds of spaces, narrative or otherwise. I was also heartened by Portelli's use of the word 'art' to describe such practice. I knew I was always engaged in art-making, even when just listening. His words are relevant to what we discuss now, and I return to some of these ideas in Chapter Five as well. But in terms of *We Know What We Like* I knew that the space of dialogue and communication that the project sought to explore and capture was to be *a space made by listening*.

4.2.1 Dialogical Art

When we started planning the work we were both approaching the project as a primarily a work of dialogue. Art objects created by the artists may emerge from the dialogues, and these would have their own value and aesthetic logic, but from our perspective as conveners, curators and presenters of the project's documentation, the key focus was dialogue and listening. In this regard the work is situated within a tradition of what art critic and scholar Grant Kester calls dialogical art (Kester 2005).

The field of dialogical art is part of a general trend in artistic practice in the late twentieth century inspired by texts such as Walter Benjamin's *The Author As Producer* (1962), and the pedagogically-inclined, socially-engaged practice of artists such as Joseph Beuys and Suzanne Lacey. Vivienne Reiss, in her introduction to *The Art of Negotiation* (2007), notes that

> The proliferation of seemingly interchangeable terms such as 'socially engaged', 'participatory', 'collaborative', 'situated', 'relational' or 'dialogic' is testament to this expanding strand of arts practice, adding value rather than replacing existing modes of working. This practice emphasises collective rather than individual creativity and it presents an alternative model to that of Modernist practice which positions the artist as separate to society. (2007)

Dialogical art practices have been surveyed extensively in Kester's 2005 book, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (2005/2013). In the book Kester lays out his model for understanding existing artistic practices that may not identify as a formal movement yet which 'all define art, and the value and significance of aesthetic experience, in terms of a process of communication' (p.3). Whilst in 2005 there may not have been a distinct field of dialogical art, there seemed to be an explosion of such work in the subsequent decade (see Calo, 2012 and Bradfield, 2013 for further critical reflection on the field), with artists self-identifying as operating in that field and conferences such as the biannual In Dialogue, based in Nottingham, emerging to discuss the implications of this turn[1]. Such forms of participatory and socially-engaged practices have re-emerged from the shadows of the eighties and nineties, in which they have been skulking since the maligning of community art after its prominence in the 1970s. Books such as Kester's as well as Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012), have mapped out the terrain and offered critical perspectives on such work, raising their profile and status within the art world and in academia. Indeed, in 2016 a whole floor of the new Tate Modern building was devoted to 'Art and Community', placing Suzanne Lacy's totemic participatory and dialogical work *The Crystal Quilt* (1985-1987) at its centre, suggesting the notion of community (with community being both a space and reason for practice) has been placed squarely in the mainstream of contemporary art.

Kester positions dialogical art as a separate field to what Nicolas Bourriaud has termed

[1] I ran a listening workshop at In Dialogue in November 2016 (see Research Outcomes).

'relational aesthetics'. Bourriaud defines relational aesthetics as 'a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context' (Bourriaud, 2002)[1]. However, for Kester, Bourriaud's relational aesthetics describes works that may take the form of a social interaction - Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free/Still) (*1992) being an exemplar, where Tiravanija set up a Thai kitchen in New York's 303 Gallery - but still occur in the objectifying space of the art gallery. For Kester, such works are only superficially about interaction. They take a social situation - cooking in the case of Tiravanija - and turn it into a spectacle to be observed, rather than into a situation where audience and/or participant actually have agency to determine the shape, subject or outcome of the work.[2]

For Kester such works are still operating via the traditional modernist paradigms. Kester's model of the dialogical posits the notion of communicability as being central to the artworks creation and reception. We will return to Kester's critique of modernist and avant-garde positions in a moment, but it worth noting now the overlap this critique has with Ultra-Red's own issue with modernist and avant-garde strategies within sound art (as exemplified by Cox's formulation of neo-modernist sound art discussed in the previous chapter).

4.2.2 Listening In Dialogue

Kester's foregrounding of communicability and dialogue affords listening a central position in such practice. Listening is explicitly explored by Kester via the work of Singaporean artist Jay Koh (see figure 32):

> For Koh an art practice that privileges dialogue and communication can't be based on the serial imposition of a fixed formal or spatial motif (as in Tiravanija's "cafes" and "lounges"). Rather, it must begin with an attempt to understand as thoroughly as possible the specific conditions and nuances of a given site or

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1 In recent years the term 'relational' has been applied to many works that operate at the level of the social or contain interactive or communal elements - Lawrence English's used of the term, discussed in the previous chapter, is derived from Bourriaud's formulation.

2 With regards sound, this problematic aspect of relational aesthetics is one reason why I argued earlier that Lawrence English's notion of relational listening was only a partial step towards the type of social listening I was tentatively moving towards.

community. Only then can the appropriate or strategically effective formal manifestation, gesture or situation be devised, in response to those specific conditions. Well before the enunciative act of art-making, the manipulation and occupation of space and material, there must first be a period of open-ness, of non-action, of learning and of listening. For Koh it is even more important that those Western artists and institutions, for whom the "assertive tradition of saying" comes so naturally, also learn to begin by listening. (Kester, 1999)

Figure 32: Koh, J. (2008) *Conversation Pieces*

Koh's own writing develops his position, arguing:

> Without allowing listening to become an integral component of a dialogical knowledge, speaking may have the tendency to acquire a despotic nature. In listening I would argue that it is more than being receptive to the articulation and content but also extends to being sensitive to body language – the posture of the body and micro expressions that embodies non-verbal communication, emotional signs that can denote discomfort, irritation and suppression of certain feelings (Koh, 2010)

Koh is here evidencing a reflexive listening, regarding both his listening and that of his participants. He recognises the partiality of speech, and the complexity of listening. He also recognises the tendency of speech to smother listening and exert power over its

hearers. Again this echoes the epistemology of listening described by Gemma Fiumara Corradi (1995), one that gives listening a strong position that renders it active, generative and resistant, rather than passive, yielding and non-operative. On the tendency for listening to be demeaned or overlooked, Kester cites feminist scholar Patrocinio Schweickart, who writes that 'there is no recognition of the necessity to give an account of listening as doing something…the listener is reduced…to the minimal quasi-speaking role of agreeing and disagreeing, silently saying yes or no.' (cited in Kester, 2005, p.113). Kester's arguments also reference Mary Field Belenky's *Women's Ways of Knowing,* a more affirmative perspective on listening which posits listening as a form of knowledge based on a 'conversational mode in which each interlocutor works to identify with the perspective of others' (ibid.). Kester notes how this mode is dependent on an appreciation of what another is saying but also the particular position of the speaker in relation to power and dominant modes of discourse. This requires as, Kester notes, a modulation of one's way of listening depending on the situation and interlocutor (a situation that echoes my discussion of ways of hearing and the case of Rachel Jeantel in the introduction):

> A speaker with a mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and rhetoric enhanced by a privileged education would communicate very differently from a speaker without such advantages. This does not mean that the insights of the less educated are any less valid, only that they may require a different form of listening (ibid.).

Kester's model of the dialogical artwork is nuanced and expansive, yet his descriptions of listening are still partial, and, I suggest, lack a more detailed account of various modes and strategies that a dialogical work might employ. As Ultra-Red note, listening still requires a literacy, and skill, so how can we find techniques for this approach? To dig deeper into this we have to cast our net wider and seek accounts in other fields, so in a moment, as an example, we will analyse *We Know What We Like*'s listening via a model of dialogic listening borrowed from business studies, and the work of Jenny Helin. But first we will explore a little more the relationship between dialogic theory and listening.

4.2.3 After Bakhtin: Lisbeth Lipari: Dialogic Listening

The listenings alluded to above are ones grounded in sociality: they operate within and between people. In this regard they can be accounted for as forms of dialogic listening. In *Listening, Feeling, Being: Towards an Ethics of Attunement* (2014) Lisbeth Lipari highlights how the term 'dialogue' etymologically contains both speaking and listening:

> We have become accustomed to hearing, in the English word "dialogue", di- as dual or two and logos as speech or argument. Hence, we typically think about dialogue as two or more people speaking together, exchanging observation and ideas back and forth. But an etymological listening also hears in dia-, the Greek prefix for through, across or by way of, and in logos, the Greek for speech and listening. (p.117)

Lipari outlines here a model of the dialogic as developed by Mikhail Bakhtin, where every utterance in the service of dialogue presupposes, even demands, a listening body to encourage, receive and understand it. Any argument, however brilliantly designed, skillfully arranged - be it wise, polemic or hilarious - is predicated on a listening lest it be lost, or worse, become a form of howling at the moon: a symptom of mania or a hermetic egotism - both failures of bilateral communication, both failed dialogues. In his theory of the utterance, Mikhail Bakhtin makes the observation that any utterance is constituted of both the 'I' statement of the speaker and the context in which the 'I' is spoken, a context that is predicated on both speaker and listener occupying a shared horizon of meaning and understanding - a 'we'; a shared horizon he describes as the 'extra-verbal'. Former student and subsequent champion of Bakhtin, Tzvetan Todorov notes:

> Only that which we, the set of interlocutors, know, see, love, and recognise - only that in which we are all united - can become the implied part of the utterance… "I" can actualise itself in discourse only by relying on the "we". In this way every quotidian utterance appears as an objective and social enthymeme. (Todorov, 1984, p.42)

This extra-verbal is constituted of the cultural norms, shared references and empathic understandings of the interlocutors, but the central position of the listener remains constant. Todorov notes how 'the utterance is not the business of the speaker alone, but the result of his or her interaction with a listener, whose reactions he or she integrates in advance' (ibid. p.43). Todorov later clarifies, 'even the simplest utterance takes on…the appearance of a little drama whose minimal roles are: the speaker, the object, the listener…the author (the speaker) may have unalienable rights upon the discourse, but so does the listener' (ibid.). This statement presents the radical suggestion that it is the listening, as much as the sound made, that constitutes discourse, and, moreover, it situates the listener in the role of agent in the production of sound.

In our reflections on the project we wrote how, 'we were interested in how works could be "listened" into existence and how the conversations occurring could be documented, in their full complexity.' This desire to 'listen' a work into existence is something I articulate more in Chapter Five, but with regards *We Know What We Like* we were aware of how our listening was allowing people to speak, and to articulate their thoughts on the matters at hand. How we listened, by what means, had a tangible effect on what was said, and so what was made during the project. In this regard, the works made were 'listened into existence'[1].

4.2.4 Jenny Helin: Dialogic Listening As An Account Of *We Know What We Like*

In an essay entitled, 'Dialogic listening: Towards an embodied understanding of the 'here and now' during field work' (Helin 2013), business studies researcher Jenny Helin draws on Bakhtin's ideas to develop a model of 'dialogic listening'. I offer it here as an example of a contemporary dialogic research practice that can be utilised by a listening artist. We can apply Helin's dialogic model to offer nuance to Kester's notion of a listening art within dialogical art practices[2].

Helin begins with a simple observation, one that resonates with my own research and its proposition that listening is, still, under-theorised. She writes, with regards her own field of business studies, that 'listening is probably one of the most common activities during field studies. Whether in interview situations, during site visits or sessions of observation, listening to what people are saying is a fundamental activity. Even so, there is a tendency to take listening for granted.' (p.1)

To counter this lack of reflective practice around listening, Helin emphasises four aspects of listening that taken together constitute a dialogic listening. These are, 'relationality and conversations as a shared activity, listening as an active process, the polyphonic nature of listening, and listening as an embodied activity' (ibid.). Each of these become strategies

[1] See also Lipari's chapter 'Listening others to speech' in *Listening, Thinking Being* (2014, pp.175-204) for a discussion of this quality of listening.

[2] I will use the term 'dialogical art' to denote the type of artwork written about by Kester, and 'dialogic listening' to denote the kind of listening occurring within dialogical art, and other artistic practice.

of listening, like those collected in Chapter One.

A dialogic listening seeks to engender an embodied sense of 'being heard' in its interlocutors, and also a sense of 'we-ness', a sense that Helin calls an 'intersubjective' stance (ibid.). The intersubjective dynamic in Helin's work is one where the researcher, Helin herself, becomes part of a dialogue, influencing and contributing, rather than monitoring and accounting.

Figure 33: Scott, D. (2014) *We Know What Like and We Like What We Know (Interview)*

For Helin, listening has an dialogic aspect that moves it beyond reception, or perception, and towards something more situated and encompassing of multiple bodies and agents: listening becomes 'not an immediate, one-pass form of listening, but a back-and-forth, dialogically structured task in which, crucially, everything which is said and done, is done in response to something that happens within the situation of listening' (p.15). It is this form of listening, a socially embodied, dialogical form, that *We Know What We Like* sought to employ. Indeed, the notion of 'back and forth' perhaps encapsulates the listening I have been moving towards in this study, away from the mono-directional listening of audience to artist present in much sound art.

Figure 34: Scott, D. and Scott, T. (2014) *We Know What Like and We Like What We Know (Alastair Levy's Work)*

We can take Helin's first principle of listening as a 'shared activity' and explore its relevance to *We Know What We Like.* We were very keen, as organisers and facilitators of the project, to be 'present' in the work, in its development, in the dialogues that bore the works and in the documentation and dissemination of the works. This was not to prove our 'authorship' of the work, but rather to recognise that all the parties involved were present and contributing to the work produced, contributing as listeners, speakers and makers. As the project was partly intended as an usurping of 'traditional' models of curation, commissioning and making, we didn't want, as nominal curators of the project, to be 'invisible' and powerful behind-the-scenes operators, instead we wanted to be recognised as active participants ourselves, with agency that could be accountable and visible. So, we were often present at meetings between artists and households, and our voices, and faces, were very present in the final booklet we produced for the project. Helin notes that, 'the illusion of the researcher and the research participants as being individually separated is still prevalent'. Certainly within art practice there is often a clear demarcation in roles between curator, artist and audience (even within participatory projects), with approaches that seek to merge these identities and position being rare and often seeming radical in their mission The works that emerged from *We Know What We Like…* were the results of 'shared activity' and all those involved recognised this, as one of the artists noted:

It's been such an enjoyable process and has definitely given me more joy in my

> everyday work as an artist. So often when you're commissioned, curators don't actually talk to you and can't be arsed (sic) to discuss what they like. I really enjoyed that all the way we were carrying this together. It felt like, "this is what it could be like". This has really reinforced the type of art I want to do. (Interview in Scott and Scott, 2014c)

Taking Helin's second aspect of 'listening as an active process', we can evidence this in *We Know What We Like* Helin writes, 'others will always hear (see, feel, know, understand) something that, to some degree, differs from what I experience. The difference – the surplus of what I experience – is a prerequisite for dialogic encounters to evolve.' (p.4). *We Know What We Like* was a project that sought to seek out that surplus of experience and share it. The participants had particular experiences of contemporary art that represented a perspective of 'otherness' compared to the experience of the artists, and myself and Trish as organisers, and vice versa. And it was in listening that this surplus of experience was circulated. As one of the participants noted:

> To be honest I couldn't get anything out of it. I don't think we understood the work inside it. There were three or four pictures in this massive building and we just walked out and went, "What was that?" That downed our expectations of what art was like (sic). Also art is everywhere. That's another thing. You look at things in a different light all of a sudden. I'd like to say I'm going to go and do art but I'm not artistic in that sense. But I'd like to be a lot more involved along the line. So now when we're in an area where there's an art gallery, we'll take the time to wander in and will feel more comfortable approaching people (Interview in Scott and Scott, 2014c).

All participants and artists had moments when this 'surplus' was apparent. And it was in the desire to communicate that this surplus was explored. This acceptance of surplus, of sharing otherness, was also tacitly noted by one the artists who was initially daunted by the requests of her host family:

> It was the most frightening thing when you said you wanted the piece to outlive you. A lot of my work is made out of cheap materials, or it's video, performance or something situational. Sometimes I make objects but I never think about how they'll last. And suddenly I've had to think about longevity. We had these profound conversations about mortality and the end of time. Going on the train

and looking at the landscape and seeing it go past then made me think about blurriness, and how memory works, and I started playing with your photos. The little hints you gave me started to grow (ibid.).

So the work itself grew out of these dialogues; dialogues that offered up otherness through speech that was received through listening.

Figure 35: Scott, D. and Scott, T. (2014) *We Know What Like and We Like What We Know (Rosalie Schweiker's Work)*

Helin then outlines the notion of a 'polyphony of listening'. She writes that, 'one of the implications of recognising polyphony is the need to listen to the simultaneous interplay of voices in the field, and how these voices contribute to the multitude of possible meanings, rather than trying to combine and merge them into a single strong voice.' (p.4). As conveners of the project Trish and I were keen that all dissemination of the work was multi-voiced and accepted differing perspectives. Indeed, we were, covertly perhaps, quite excited about disagreements and moments of tension within the project, where the 'surplus' outlined above resulted in misunderstanding and possible conflict, and also revelation about divergent opinions on contemporary art. However, this did not occur. Each partnership was productive and genuine, and there were no outright conflicts. The only moments when conflict was apparent was during a radio interview I had with BBC Radio Kent, where I was interviewed alongside a local 'cultural commentator' in a slightly adversarial mode where the discussion was about whether or not contemporary art should be 'forced' on a disinterested public. The staged tension was quickly relaxed as we both agreed that, of course, culture should not be forced on people. We were asking people

what they wanted, and actively making 'disinterested audiences' agents in the production of culture.

Figure 36: Scott, D. and Scott. T. (2014) *We Know What Like and We Like What We Know (Listening Event)*

So, in a spirit of polyphony, the publication we produced featured the voices of both Trish and me, and the participants, and a radio programme (broadcast on BRFM in Swale) featured everybody's voices. Trish and I did act as editors, but this was with the collaboration of participants, and was recognised in a live-listening presentation of a sound documentary held as part of the Whitstable Biennale satellite programme[1].

I should note that, as we had the final say on these documents, we recognised we had more power than the participants, and this could be viewed as problematic. Indeed, Claire Bishop has critiqued this documentary aspect of participatory work, where the project ultimately lives on via documentation produced by the 'lead artist' or a curator, so foreclosing any other narratives on the work (Bishop, 2012). We recognised this problem, and perhaps didn't find an adequate solution to the issue. As we promised to the funders particular outcomes - a book, a radio show, a presentation, some artworks - there was perhaps always a moment where listening would cease and a 'final' utterance - the last word - was given.

[1] Listen to USB files '9. We Know What We Like.wav' for these radio segments.

Figure 37: Scott, D. and Scott.T (2014) *We Know What Like and We Like What We Know (Alicja Rogalska's Work)*

The last of Helin's aspects of a dialogic listening was 'an embodied listening', which refers to an awareness of listening as a multi-sensory practice. One this subject one of the artists noted:

> It's true - there was a direct engagement. I suppose I felt like it was a genuine discussion. Maybe that question is easier for you to answer as you were observing the process. I would say the relationship we developed, over a brief period of time. I don't know if it was relational or dialogical. It just felt straight and sincere. I suppose the work was object-based, quite traditional in that sense but the activity around it was quite different. You could say the process was also part of the work, maybe more for you guys, but still in a way for us. The process was really interesting. Working with everyone. The whole thing was part of it. The thing that goes on the wall was one part of the whole process. How you get there is important and is part of the work (Interview in Scott and Scott, 2014c).

In this regard listening becomes a broader catalyst for a sense of openness. One of the artists described this in terms of courage, echoing, for me, Corradi Fiumara's conception of listening as a 'strong' activity:

> I think any project, without openness you're lost from the start. You are always working with other people - other artists, people in the space. Lots of people are

> involved. If you don't start from a position of openness you're lost before you begin. Anais Nin said life expands and contracts in direct response to one's courage. Openness is related to courage in that its a lack of fear, releasing control. It's not easy, allowing that. You have to compromise generally. There are lots of compromises in any show. You can't be so rigid in your beliefs. You have to be open. (ibid.)

4.3 Against Modernism: Communication, Dialogue And Listening

> This may seem like something of a commonplace but in fact the idea that a work of art should be accessible and understandable, or that its form should be determined by and through interaction with the "viewer" goes very much against the grain of dominant beliefs in both modernist and postmodernist art and art theory. (Kester, 1999, n.p.)

We Know What We Like was a project that sought communication and understanding. Whilst the project was seemingly harmonious and enriching for all the participants, it was also a radical proposal. The notion of an artwork being a form of communication is one at odds with much art criticism of the twentieth century. Since formulated by texts such as Clement Greenberg's 'Modernist Painting' (1961) or much of the work of Theodor Adorno,[1] a dominant paradigm of modern and contemporary art of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century has been that of shock and resistance to an easily graspable meaning. I refer here not just to the shock of the outrageous or morally indecent, but also the shock of the radical, the unintelligible or the stark. Modern art of the early to mid-twentieth century was often concerned with purity or form, in the case of movements such as minimalism and expressionism, rather than any externalities of the work. Later post-modernist art used an abundance of symbols and signs to bewilder and intoxicate the viewer, in an attempt to destabilise fixed world-views and hierarchies. Both, to different extents and in different ways, shock the viewer and seek to reveal something about the world that the viewer was previously unaware of, so enacting some kind of transformation within the spectator.

Such shock presupposes a naivety and lack of knowledge on the part of the audience,

[1] See Lijster's 2017 book *Benjamin and Adorno on Art and Art Criticism: Critique of Art* for an overview.

one that is revealed by the unveiling of the meaning-resistant art object. The shocking artwork has a double-revelatory function, firstly revealing a hitherto obscured aspect of reality (or unreality, it doesn't matter as the gesture of revelation becomes the operative force at play, rather than its subject), and secondly revealing a deficiency in the audience who, lacking understanding or awareness, are cowed into shock and bafflement, as they have no other response at that moment, to deal with the novelty of the encounter.

The modernist or avant-garde work, and also the post-modern assemblage, with their suspicion of meaning, resist the stymying discourses of interpretation. The audience, new and old, will remain perplexed, on the cusp of communication, but always resisted, a situation that is, to celebrants of this approach, a sign of a successful work. For critics such as Theodor Adorno, the best way to critique dominant hegemonic narratives was to reject the mainstream, and make art that was difficult and elusive, and required hard work on the part of the audience. Critic Keti Chukhrov notes in her essay 'On the False Democracy of the Art World' how this approach 'turned the artwork into a piece, blocking perception, pleasure, or the judgment of taste, so that such work would exist in extra-social conditions rather than be perceived by a society that can never evade the capitalist economy and the cultural industry' (Chukhrov, 2014, p.1). A work that resists meaning resists categorisation and domination by the sadistic machinations of power. An artwork resisting meaning becomes something political, however vaguely. To resist meaning, to resist communicability, becomes allied to more concrete forms of resistance: resisting meaning or interpretation claims a resistive affinity to resisting authority, resisting dictatorship; even to physically resisting power.

This critique of modernism - that it's willfully obtuse and lacking actual political efficacy - can apply to modernist artworks as discussed by Hughes or Greenberg, and also to the sound art celebrated by Cox in his essay 'Neo-Modernist Sound Art' (as discussed in the previous chapter). Cox notes how the works are political, but none of them actually enact anything in the real sphere of politics. They remain in the gallery, willfully enigmatic and sublime.

In contrast to this avant-garde tradition *We Know What We Like* was a communicative project, one that sought understanding, and sought to represent that understanding through text, sound and the performative moment of listening and speaking during the closing event at the Whitstable Biennale. We didn't seek to 'shock' the audience, and the

works were produced transparently, with artistic motivation and intent being openly discussed throughout the process. The works were borne of society and people, and were not 'extra-social' or outside of culture.

4.4 *Spaceship School*

In 2015, again working with Trish Scott, and with the Families department at Tate Modern, I co-developed the project *Spaceship School* (Scott and Scott, 2015a). Again, this work was explicitly about communication, and was an attempt to reconfigure pedagogical relationships in a playful and provocative way. It was consciously communal, dialogical and participatory. It was somewhat utopian in this regard, referencing sixties movements that sought to reconcile art and society (the title was an appropriation of R. Buckminster Fuller's notion of the Spaceship Earth). It also deepened my own engagement with dialogical art and expanded this with reference to the work of Jacques Rancière and his non-hierarchical and anti-revelatory critique of contemporary art practice. These ideas permeated my understanding of listening as a form of practice and form the basis of Chapter Five's discussion of the position of the listening artist.

Spaceship School, like *We Know What We Like,* used listening as a central methodology and aesthetic. The project was conducted over six weekends of workshops and we were working with foster families from the London area. We described the project on the original proposal as follows:

> *Spaceship School i*s a cooperative space for learning, listening, sharing and teaching made by you. An intergalactic school where nothing is too small or too big to explore.
>
> Using film, sculpture, sound, performance and Tate Britain itself to exchange interests, skills, experience and knowledge we will create and launch *Spaceship School* together; an open-ended learning programme directed by you and an immersive artwork that will educate, inspire and entertain.
>
> Working closely with a small number of families *Spaceship School* will test out the possibility of establishing an alternative, inter-generational school within Tate where young people will teach adults, adults will teach young people, and both will teach visitors, based on their passions and interests.

…

Spaceship School will empower different generations to identify and communicate their existing skills, knowledge, interests and priorities to their care family members within the frame of a dialogical artwork. Working with a small number of families we will facilitate a process focused on drawing out what young people and their carers know already, using this to build confidence and re-assess where, and by whom, knowledge is held. We want to experiment with art being a space to think about what knowledge is, what forms of knowledge are important to young people and how teaching can be a form of learning.[1]

The project culminated in a day-long installation at Tate Britain, conceived and constructed by the children and their carers as a space for sharing knowledge and learning skills (see figure 39). The installation featured sculptural structures, instructional films, live workshops and texts projected across the space. The preceding workshops explored space, movement and skill-sharing, all contributing in different ways to the final space the group constructed.

The workshops all began with a moment of listening, where I led the group through short listening activities based on techniques derived from Deep Listening, including a variation on Oliveros' 'Environmental Dialogue' (1974). Whilst the majority of the sessions were concentrated on making, these moments of listening were intended to encourage an active, open and reciprocal mode of interaction, framing all the subsequent activities as ones where listening was central. I was keen to foreground listening as a central methodology for the project, drawing on the listenings I had previously explored within the sound art context. I was also, more consciously and actively, reaching back to Cristina Rinaldi's work on listening, creating a 'listening context' where individuals would take the time to hear each other. It was the moment where Rinaldi's ideas began to bear fruit within my practice and move from being a fringe interest to an active and operational methodological and aesthetic tool. The work also intended to employ an imaginative listening but in more social and cooperative ways.

1 From our original proposal document for Tate Britain (Scott and Scott, 2015).

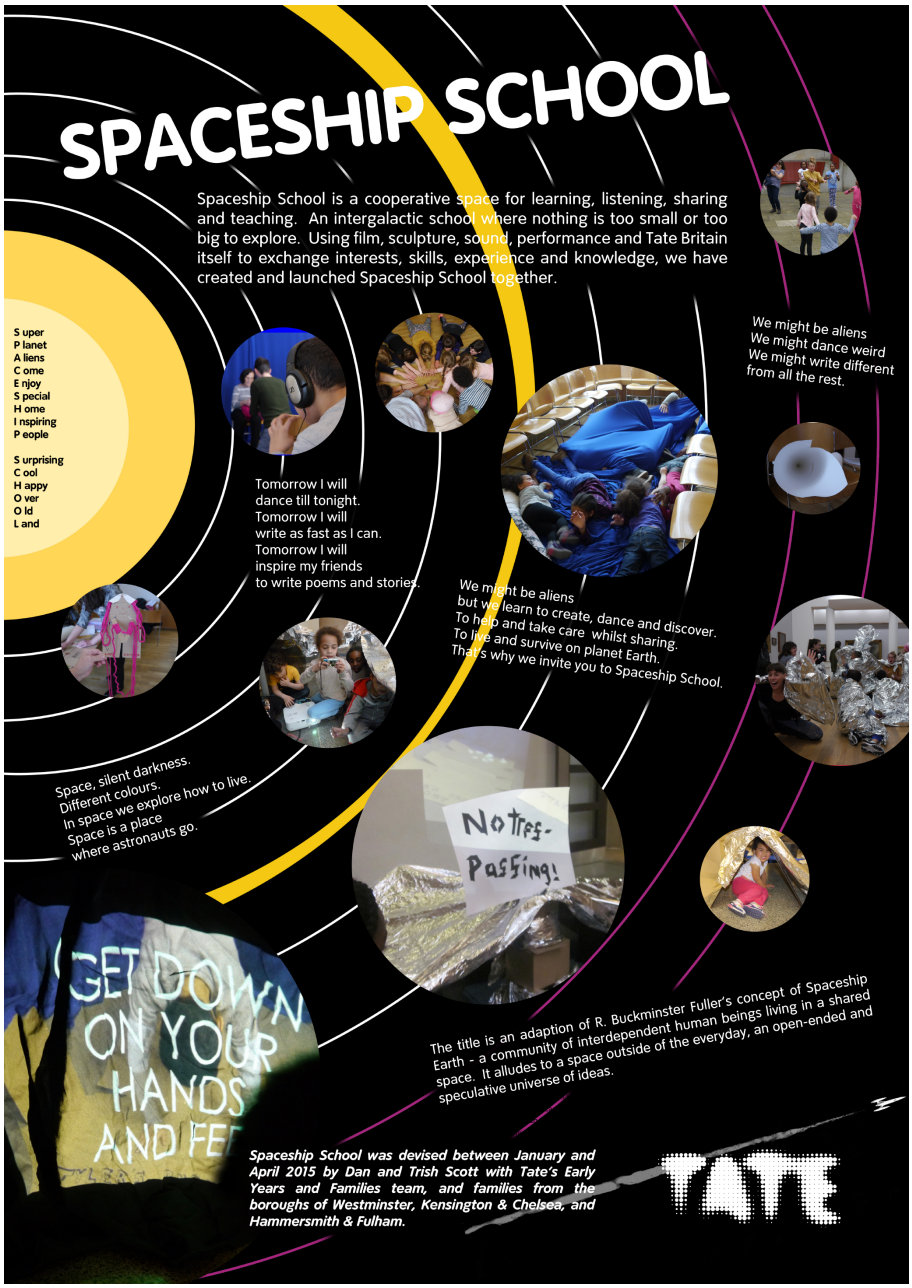

Figure 38: Scott, D. 2014, *Spaceship School (Promotional Poster)*

Spaceship School was explicit in its desire to explore communication and to destabilise hierarchies within pedagogical contexts. We were consciously working in a context of the school as an art space, echoing initiatives such as Open School East:

> In terms of locating the project critically we are interested in *Spaceship School* i) contributing towards conversations concerning the status/crisis of education, as well as the corresponding rise of alternative art schools such as Silent University, Open School East, Islington Mill and the Hayward Gallery's 'Wide Open School' and ii) experimenting with the dynamics at work in learning programmes by

reversing the usual hierarchies often implicit in classroom and family structures.[1]

We were also conscious of more commercial pedagogical enterprises such as Kidzania, which opened around the same time at Westfield in Stratford. Kidzania is a space sponsored by companies such as the Gourmet Burger Company, advertising company Grey, British Airways, Hampton's estate agents and others, who fund and run mini-role plays of their workplaces for children to experience. I suggest such a model of pedagogy is based on a top-down model of teaching, encouraging only behaviours and skills that are required by those companies to find solutions to the problems they face, rather than a model of listening and cooperation, where problems and solutions, and modes engagement, are determined by the participants.

Our role as facilitators was to allow discussion, sharing of knowledge, and to help shape a space for this sharing to occur. Whilst we were critiquing other forms of learning and engagement with art practice, we were not doing this through a revelatory mechanism. Instead we were facilitating the creation of an alternative space that could also be a space of communication and empowerment, with listening as a central methodology, modality and aesthetic.

4.4.1 Critical Art And Symbolic vs. Actual Social Practice Within *Spaceship School*

The notion of both the shocking and revelatory artwork, as discussed in the previous section in relation to Kester's dialogical art model, is also critiqued by French critic Jacques Rancière for underestimating the heuristic abilities of the audience itself, and for creating a hierarchy of access to 'truth', a hierarchy which is maintained through the mechanism of the revelation. Indeed, Rancière is a key figure in Clare Bishop's critiques of participatory practice, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art And The Politics of Spectatorship*, referenced earlier. She writes:

1 Scott, Dan and Scott, Trish: Proposal for *Spaceship School.*

Figure 39: Tate Early Years and Families. (2015) *Spaceship School*

> Although Rancière's arguments are philosophical rather than art-critical, he has undertaken important work in debunking some of the binaries upon which the discourse of politicised art has relied: individual/collective, author/spectator, active/passive, real life/art. (2012, p18).

Rancière's work[1] is characterised by a distrust of hierarchies of expertise, both in academia and the arts. Since his influential book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991) – exploring the teaching of the French scholar Joseph Jacotot and his principle that everyone is born with equal intelligence - and, most pointedly in relation to art, *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009), Rancière has critiqued notions of expertise and hierarchy within political and aesthetic systems. In *The Emancipated Spectator* Rancière both addresses the presumptuous nature of art that seeks to reveal and educate and also notes how such work operates within the very structures of power and privilege that it claims to subvert:

> showing the spectator what she does not know how to see, and making her feel ashamed of what she does not want to see, even if it means that the critical system presents itself as a luxury commodity pertaining to the very logic it denounces. (p.29-30)

Such work enacts a posture of resistance which ultimately is only given power by the endorsement agency of the art world from which the work is borne, having no agency in itself within the 'real' space of political action. As Keti Chukhrov notes, 'resisting attitudes and constructed situations are often used in art as externalised, abstract, and formalised actualities rather than necessities stemming from the material and immanent bond with political constellations' (2014, p.2).

'Critical art' is Rancière's name (2009, pp.74-84) for movements in the avant-garde during the late twentieth century that attempted to affect political change, or engender political consciousness through such jarring, provocative or 'difficult' gestures. For Rancière, critical art sought to 'build awareness of the mechanisms of domination to turn the spectator into a conscious agent of world transformation.' However, critiquing such claims, and echoing Kester's suggestion of a lack of faith in audiences presupposed by the shocking artwork, Rancière's argues that 'the exploited rarely require an explanation of

[1] Rancière is also discussed within the context of socially-engaged art by Clare Bishop in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* pp. 26-30.

the laws of exploitation. The dominated do not remain in subordination because they misunderstand the existing state of affairs but because they lack confidence in their capacity to transform it' (2009, p.44).

By arguing that for many audiences the situation is not one of not knowing the issues at stake but of lacking agency to address these issues, Rancière is claiming that a practice of 'revealing' is not wholly honest in terms of the materiality of human experience. For Rancière, audiences do not want to be enlightened, instead they want to be empowered. Moreover, for Rancière, a critical theory of contemporary art, and of politics, needs to move beyond this 'revealing' strategy and towards a more open epistemological landscape that flattens out differences between master and student, or expert and ignoramus.

The mechanism of revealing is explored most pointedly by Rancière in *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2004). Rancière seeks to find a position beyond one of revealing. He writes, 'where one searches for the hidden beneath the apparent, a position of mastery is established. I have tried to conceive of a topography that does not presuppose this position of mastery' (p.46). We can find here many parallels and overlaps between Rancière and Kester's critiques of avant-garde practice in the twentieth century.

In his book *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (2011), Pablo Helguera calls such work 'symbolic' rather than 'actual' responses to a social situation (p.7). They are works that address social or political issues at an allegorical, metaphorical or symbolic level. Helguera's distinction is useful in differentiating critical approaches to practice that deals with such issues, echoing Ultra-Red's concern that some modernist approaches lack efficacy or the desire to deal in actual social change[1].

Spaceship School explicitly attempted the destabilising effect that Rancière maps out in his work, and sought to create, to borrow Helguera's term, an 'actual' rather than symbolic space. We wanted to encourage structures where carers learnt from their children, and

[1] I would place a question mark over this binary as gauging the effect of an artwork on future actions undertaken as a result of encountering that work, is moot: I would argue that a song such as Public Enemy's *Fight The Power* (1989), or an artwork such as Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001), whilst operating symbolically in their representation of social struggle, have affected change through empowering listeners and viewers to engage in activism, after the moment of encounter.

vice versa, and where visitors to the installation learnt from the participants. We wanted this to be a genuine learning space, and not a symbolic rendering of a shared space.

Figure 40: Scott, D. (2015) *Spaceship School (Screenshot From Instructional Video)*

Spaceship School manifested another idea proposed by Rancière. For Rancière, a means of moving towards more egalitarian aesthetic communities is to engender change not through provocation and revelation, but through practices that actually challenge these dominant aesthetic 'regimes'. Rancière's situates this potentiality within the social, claiming 'the loss of "social bond" and the incumbent duty of artists to repair it - these are today's directives' (2004, p.57).

Also, as Kester does, Rancière offers up examples of artistic practice that address these issues and attempt to create art that overcomes such hierarchies and elitist positions. In the chapter 'Problems and Transformations of Critical Art' in the book *Aesthetics and its Discontents* (2009) Rancière's proposes four tendencies in early twenty-first century art - The Game, The Inventory, The Encounter/Invitation and The Mystery - each pushing beyond the concerns of modernism and post-modernism and constituting new forms of aesthetic practice (2009, p.45). The 'encounter' or 'invitation' is where 'the artist acts as a collector who sets up a reception area and appeals to the passer-by to engage in an unexpected relation with someone' (ibid.). Rancière also develops this notion of an 'aesthetic community'. Not a 'community of aesthetes', as he notes, but something more embedded in wider social structures:

> A number of artists today set out to create no more artworks. Instead they want

> to get out of the museum, and provoke modifications of the space of everyday life, giving rise to new forms of relations….What the artist does is weave a new sensory fabric by tearing percepts and affects out of the perceptions and affections that constitute the fabric of ordinary experience. Weaving this new fabric means creating a form of common expression, or a form of expression of the community, namely 'the song of the earth or the cry of men'. (2008, pp.3-4).

Spaceship School was a work that was based on encounter and invitation, the invitation was proposed and enacted by participants and, on the day of the installation, children were actually running around the main galleries at Tate Britain gathering visitors. I concede that it was not 'out of the museum' (indeed it was operating at the heart of one of the most institutionalised of British art spaces) but it was a space that sought to bring the everyday world *into* the museum. We wanted to create 'new forms of relations' between participants and artists, and between us and an audience.

For *Spaceship School* we provided some parameters via the mediums we shared with the group - dance, installation, film - but the content of the works created emerged from the group and the skills they wanted to share. So, the dance movements were based on skills and ideas from the group - running, knitting, joking - and the films we made were instructional films[1], based on YouTube tutorials, where participants shared their skills with future viewers. For our project objects and situations were both created by the group, us included, and the project was not an authored situation where the participants were merely 'finishing' the work.

4.4.2 Listening In *Spaceship School*

Interestingly within Rancière's writing neither the word nor practice of listening is ever foregrounded. However, Rancière is interested in the notion of the relational, and of the encounter, both situations where a dialogic listening operates. I would push Rancière further and suggest that much of what he discusses could also be understood within a framework of listening. It is in listening that artists begin to 'give rise to new forms of relations'.

The listening artist operates in the space of 'dissensus', a useful idea proposed by Rancière

[1] See Figure 38 and USB file '10. Spaceship School instructional film.mp4' and 11. Spaceship School dance film.mp4'

in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (2003), and a central plank of his discussions of art and aesthetics, for comparing and analysing the competing representations of 'reality' that occur when artistic (or political) statements are made. Dissensus is the necessary proposing of an alternative reality that offers progress, hope or something else other than what exists at the present moment. Dissensus is as present and necessary in political action as in artistic practice. The dissensual other is often one imagined in a near-future, not yet realised but attainable and on the horizon. The notion of dissensus is not one of 'revealing' but of proposing and opening up to dialogue.

The listening artist operates within this precarious dissensual space where two competing regimes of the sensible compete, disagree, or are at odds. Both the political and the art space are dissensual, mainly because much art posits a reality loaded with potentialities and promise that are not actually apparent in the world in which such art is made.

The listening artist is once removed from the everyday, and her listening offers a position separate from it; she is, in a sense, working mimetically, as through the act of listening, or the various acts of listening proposed by a constellation of listening strategies, a parallel hearing occurs, a deeper, wider, narrower, reduced, expanded, affective, or whatever, hearing of the everyday occurs that was not present via a prosaic hearing of the world. And, as in mimetic processes, it's both of the everyday, that is affected by direct contact with it, and also different, exercising its own power over that everyday, and over the audience, so offering alterity - a new rendering of that everyday through its proposition of difference and otherness.

In this regard *Spaceship School* was a work of dissensus, proposing an alternative present within pedagogy whilst also enacting that space in actuality.

The public showing of the work was a large installation that was built by the participants and was accessed through a 'portal' made of foil ponchos, both contributing to an invitation and a space that came from the participants (us included) rather than via 'expert' artists. The children made a play of this reveal by inviting guests through the portal, zapping them to transform them into 'aliens', and then allowing them access to the space. The space itself was one of communication and active making. Guests could learn to knit, to make rubber band balls or to do exercise workouts. The walls featured projected texts written by the participants about learning, sharing and their conceptions of what *Spaceship School* was to the group.

Figure 41: Tate Early Years and Families. (2015) *Spaceship School (Detail)*

The event was well-attended and visitors quickly became participants, working with the families on making and learning. The space became dialogical and open, friendly and communicative. And, most radically, both were spaces made by listening.

4.5 Clare Bishop On The Limits Of Socially-Engaged Art

It is crucial to note that reflecting on both *Spaceship School* and *We Know What We Like* in the context of Rancière's ideas does raise some issues. Such practices, defined by Rancière as not always nominally 'artworks' - as radical practice happening 'out of the museums[1]' and dealing in 'modifications of the space of everyday life, giving rise to new forms of relations' - are not without controversy. The problem of art dissolving into life, of a socially-engaged practice dropping the 'art' from its descriptor is a constant tension in such practice, something Pablo Helguera notes in *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook*. Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012) raises a number of problems with the positions socially-engaged, participatory and dialogical art can take. Firstly, on the problem of the social artwork dissolving into the social sphere and ceasing to be art. Then, connected to this, is

[1] Of course, Spaceship School was not 'outside the museum', but it sought to create an alternative form of space within that structure.

the question of aesthetics. Bishop notes how participatory practice is often discussed more in terms of its ethical efficacy rather than its aesthetic properties (p.26). Moreover, such work is also discussed as a form of resistance *against* the privileging of the aesthetic over the moral, the ethical or the political that occurs in much gallery-based art practice and art criticism. Bishop notes how, for some socially-engaged artists 'the aesthetic is (at worst) an elitist realm of unbridle seduction complicit with spectacle' (pp26-27). So aesthetics are not only overlooked but also actively rejected.

Bishop argues that this creates dissonance in how such practice is critiqued. Such a position is indicative of an 'ethical turn' and, Bishop asks (pp.22-23), if the bottom-line for judging such work becomes not aesthetic success but ethical properness and efficacy, then why are such works presented and compared with other works of art and not social programmes that seek similar ends (e.g. community building, conflict resolution, social work, and so on)?

For example, should I then compare my work with *Spaceship School* to a project like The Restorative Listening Project (RLP), a non-art, but socially-engaged initiative based in Portland, USA? RLP is a project designed to encourage cross-dialogue and an engaged listening between white residents and black residents of a borough of Portland, telling their stories of the effects of gentrification on the neighbourhood. In her essay, 'Listening Through White Ears: Cross-racial dialogues as a strategy to address the racial effects of gentrification' (Drew, 2011). Emily Drew describes the aims of RLP being:

> to mitigate the relational effects of gentrification and construct "antiracist place" by (1) positioning people of colour as knowledge producers about the institutional and interpersonal effects of racism in the neighbourhood; (2) confronting the tactics of white denial; and (3) promoting consciousness about systemic racism. A RLP session begins with members of the local black community speaking of their experiences, and white audiences just listening. (p.2)

We might argue that such a project offers a more effective listening than a socially-engaged artist might be able to produce. We shall look at these questions in more depth in the next chapter, where I speculate on what a listening aesthetic might look, sound and feel like, and what delineates such a practice from other forms of work that utilise listening, such as counseling or the truth and reconciliation style models of RLP.

Bishop critiques Kester's argument that art that shocks or reveals is patronizing or

exploitative with regards to its audience. For Bishop such a position is problematic 'since it self-censors on the basis of second-guessing how others will think and respond' (p.26). This results in practices that seek only to engage, connect and resolve, foreclosing the possibility of 'unease, discomfort, frustration…contradiction, exhilaration and absurdity' (ibid.), all notions that Bishop sees as central to artistic practice.

Bishop's arguments, which also draw in Rancière and his discussion of 'aesthetic regimes' are potent, and I have sympathy with her fear of a sanitised and superficial form of participation where disagreement or strangeness are occluded in favour of positivity and agreement. Yet, I would suggest that a listening practice is one that actively hears difference and otherness, and does not seek to mute it, and, if engaged with rigour, disallows any slip towards a bland consensus. To do this requires constant self-vigilance and critical awareness of the ways in which listening can be co-opted and exploited in ways which foreclose disruption and change rather than explore and encourage it. Holding onto notions such as Rancière's dissensus, or Helin's surplus, allow for spaces were matters remained unresolved, or speculative or *plain weird*. Moreover, recognizing the non-meaning aspect of listening, reaching back to Nancy as discussed in Chapter One (p.35), means listening practices are inherently and necessarily risky and ambiguous, and it becomes the artist's job to hold such a space and ensure it is represented in the work.

4.6 Justine Lloyd And 'The Listening Cure'

Following on from Bishop's critiques of participatory practice, and also Michael Gallagher's concerns that I explored in Chapter Three, Justine Lloyd's[1] essay 'The Listening Cure' (2009) notes how listening is increasingly promoted as a panacea for the ills of society and she cites the examples of politicians listening tours, management textbooks on listening skills, and other discursive movements away from rhetoric towards dialogue. She is suspicious of such positioning where:

> listening in and of itself runs the risk of becoming a soft technology of power. Listening, practised simply on behalf of a centre which admits certain positions to the ear of the ruler is simply the regulation of who may speak, and is merely the promise of being heard without recourse to any form of redistribution or action as

[1] Lloyd is a lecturer and researcher in sociology at Macquarie University in Australia. She was part of the two year Listening Project at the University of Sydney which discussion of and publication about the practices, politics and ethics of the cultural literacy of 'listening' (Macquarie University).

a result (p.479).

Lloyd suggests that the foregrounding of listening as a cure acts as a form of absolution, relieving the State of wider obligations of care. She notes that, 'as a cure for conflict, the labour of listening which we are both individually asked to do and the state does on our behalf, emerges from this absence of state responsibility of care for social conditions' (ibid.). Listening can be appropriated by power. The listening of the priest or the manager or the politician are all prone to abuse: claiming to cure, they can in fact prolong the disease.

Moreover, Lloyd notes how listening becomes a resolutely individualist pursuit, connected with notions of personal growth and ethical conduct, a notion echoed by Lisbeth Lipari (2014) in her formulation of an atomist listener as discussed in the Introduction. Lloyd calls for an appreciation that 'long-standing constraints on listening, as well as sudden claims to expertise need to be understood and situated from the standpoint of appropriations of the listening subject' (p.481). This is a refrain we have heard in the work of Ultra-Red and Jay Koh, that listening must be situated and reflexive, not dogmatic and procedural. For Lloyd, who listens, at what point in history, as well as who is disallowed from listening, become crucial questions, with listening becoming a resourced entity, sometimes abundant and at other times scarce. Some voices, for example, are ignored due to an incapacity to listen to difference, or because those voices are deemed as 'outside' the conversation. Lloyd notes how 'incapacities to listen – not just speak – rest on disidentification with social subjects and the "abjection" of threatening social identities' (p.482). This articulates some of the frustrations raised by Christie Zwahlen in relation to the Trayvon Martin case, as touched upon in the Introduction to this thesis. Lloyd calls for a formulation of listening that seeks to positively alter relationships, warning that 'a simple revaluation of listening without reshaping social relations at the same time is entirely problematic' (ibid.).

She writes of listening in the political realm as well as the social, but also embraces the arts as one of the areas where the complexities of listening, and of rendering representations and relationships created through listening, can be best expressed, noting that 'it often falls to artists, filmmakers and writers to provide a space for such multiple and contradictory stories to emerge – basically by slipping between realist and non-realist genres – to develop a truly entropic narrative which can sound out all the voices that may have been present from the beginning, yet have been unlistenable at different historical moments' (p.478).

The listening artist needs to explore practices that heed Lloyd's call and exploit listening as positive cultural work. As I have found, an alternative model for understanding listening as a social practice is also found in art practices that foreground listening in the context of dialogical, participatory and socially-engaged art, as well as strands of sound art practice that explore the sociality of listening and its ability to forge communality and receptiveness.

Both *We Know What We Like* and *Spaceship School* are open to all the critiques proposed by Bishop and Lloyd. To counter Bishop's critique of the non-aesthetic nature of some socially-engaged practice, I suggest that the focus on a recognisably artistic outcome - individual works in the case of *We Know What We Like* and an installation in the case of *Spaceship School* - meant that the works didn't slip into being 'non-art' or without aesthetic. With regards to Lloyd's concern about listening being appropriated without it actually having actual effects in altering social relationships, the engagement in both projects was intimate and collaborative, but, perhaps, not socially effective in a broader sense. I don't know, and have no way of knowing, how 'actual' the engagement and alternative models of learning or curation were for participants after the event had finished. The communities we created were small and temporary and we didn't attend to sustaining them after the events had finished. We listened, then we moved on. For *Spaceship School* we were also part of a broader institutional project of 'engagement': in a sense we were employed to listen as labour. The Tate galleries are required by their funders to provide such programmes for 'hard-to-reach' audiences, and we were, to an extent, instruments of this policy. In this regard, we were subject to the demands of listening as 'cultural work', designed as a balm to deeper problems of inequality.

We listened, then we moved on. We had that privilege. Yet, I must stress that all those involved in the project were committed to its political and social ambitions - to engage, to empower and to experiments with new models of interaction. Indeed, *We Know What We Like* was an explicit critique of cultural-imperialist models of foisting culture onto an uninterested public. The project was to listen to that public, and for artists to hear what people really thought of contemporary art. Yet, I concede, that these projects offer only the beginning of what my own work as a listening artist might be. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, it is only now, in 2017 that I feel I have the confidence and ability to articulate what this practice is constituted of, and what it demands. I will present this articulation in more depth during the next chapter.

4.5 Conclusion: Listening In Dialogue

At this stage my work and my accounts, via dialogical art and Rancière, of that work seem a long way from the more procedural analysis of reduced listening or innovative listening in the Open Studio project. I concede that Chapters One and Two, and Chapters Three and Four appear to present two groups of projects with two radically different approaches, even working in two different mediums. Yet, I argue, it is absolutely necessary to understand this journey from being a sound artist, to something that I call a listening artist, and to understand the forces and dilemmas which guided this path. The work I developed in this chapter is absolutely informed by my sound art work: it is informed by sound art's modes and strategies of listening, however partial and problematic they appeared to be (see Chapter Two). Without scoping them out, understanding their relationship to practice, and thinking more on their origin in particular philosophical approaches (namely phenomenology), I could not have pushed my work into this new realm of listening outlined in this chapter. Sound art holds up listening as a subject of inquiry, where it is not in fine art, or other aesthetic areas, and without this foundation, I could not have moved beyond sound art in the way I do in this and the previous chapter.

So, we conclude these two chapters with an emergent model of a listening art practice beyond sound art, one that is informed by dialogical ideas derived from Bakhtin and developed by Kester, Helin et al., one that accounts for difference in our practices of listenings, and one that takes listening beyond the individual and into the social realm. In the next chapter I will become more speculative and map out ways in which a listening artist working beyond sound art might operate, and I also draw together other practitioners who are operating in this territory, mapping out an aesthetic of listening beyond sound art.

Figure 42: Scott, D. (2017) *A Space Made By Listening #6*

CHAPTER FIVE

Against The Sound Artist: The Position Of The Listening Artist

5.1 Overview

We now come to 2017. I am coming to the end of my research. I will pause again to rehearse again the journey thus far. I wanted to scope of the multiple ways of listening that exist within sound art praxis. I wanted to use my own work as a locus for this. I knew a lot of my work was critically engaged with listening as both a subject and a method, but I found a lack of clarity about the relationship between the listening praxis apparent within the canon of sound art, and the listening within my own work.

After two years of projects I came to a realisation that many of the 'canonical' ways of listening in sound art were not accounting for much of the listening taking place within my work. This was not because the various modes and strategies of listening I explored were flawed, more that the aspects of the work I felt to be most important seemed at a remove from the type of practice that these modes and strategies dealt with. I suggested that much of sound art's listening is individualist, partly because of its roots in phenomenological analysis of the sensory world, and that it lacked an understanding of the social, political and dialogic aspects of listening. In this regard understandings of listening were often, to borrow Lisbeth Lipari's term, atomist in their approach: focusing on the individual listener and their relationship to the sounding world. I also argued that this deficit reflected a particular set of political and aesthetic concerns within a lot of sound art, which meant that work that dealt with subjects outside of these concerns found little purchase in the ways of listening sound art was mainly employing.

So, to deal with this deficit I had to look beyond sound art's ways of listening. Moreover, I began to reassess my own practice, seeking out both the listening that was unaccounted for in works I still considered to be sound art, and also in realising that a lot of other work I was doing - be it participatory, socially-engaged and/or pedagogical - was full of listening that, again, I could not adequately account for using the modes and strategies I was exploring in Chapters One and Two. As my work moved into more participatory settings I found more relevant accounts of the process of listening at play in the writing and

practice of dialogical, socially-engaged and participatory art. Extracting elements of these practices I have begun to develop a position: that of a listening artist. Over the following pages I will explore more the position of the listening artist. I will do this through a dialectical process, demanding questions of the listening artist, and responding with a mix of speculation, example and caveat. The questions are derived from my own doubt, a session on June 27th, 2017 with some CRiSAP PhD students where I shared some of my findings, and questions posed by my supervision team of Cathy Lane and Angus Carlyle during our supervision meetings. This process is a means of enacting a 'back and forth' communication within this section, with the questions acting as precursor to a listening as well as a speaking. Through this dialectic process I am teasing at the edges of the listening artist's position, attempting to trace the outline of a shadow that shifts as the sun moves across the sky. This is a speculative endeavour.

By opening up this space for a listening artist, and admitting their debt and allegiance to dialogical practices, to non-hierarchical forms of aesthetics, and to political and social engagement, I will also seek out examples of practitioners who I suggest are occupying this position of the listening artist. These individuals are working across aesthetic disciplines: from performance to poetry and critical writing. To this end I will also incorporate the work of artists Rajni Shah and Brenda Hutchinson, poet Christine Hume and writer and educator Nicole Brittingham-Furlonge into my responses.

5.2 The Position Of Listening Artist Against The Sound Artist

I began with an opposition. I offer this not as a means of creating division or antagonism between two forms of practices, rather I use this comparison as a means of positioning the listening artist against the position of the sound artist, so as to begin feeling out the parameters of such a position. The work of the listening artist often operates in realms beyond sound art, and beyond its concerns. This comparison is a means of playfully defining the position of the listening artist via an Other, the sound artist. It is meant as a provocation, and not as objective description. The lists are a form of Weberian 'ideal type' (see Weber 1905/2007) and I propose them as typical examples rather than absolute descriptions. They become two talking points against which my discussion of the difference between the sound and listening artist can begin.

The Sound Artist

makes a noise
is made by listening
puts sounds in the world
uses listening
makes a stand
makes beautiful sounds
is an author
experiments, tinkers, sculpts
finds sound in the world
is certain
is atomist
helps us hear differently
is a vehicle
is one of them

The Listening Artist

creates a space
accepts what comes
is undone by listening
goes with the flow
listens to you
questions listening
is vulnerable
doesn't make a sound
is uncertain
is holist
asks, opens, waits
doesn't make their work
is a vessel
is one of you

So, to elaborate, the sound artist puts sound in the world; often composed, worked-on, authored sound; sound which is a vehicle for all manner of symbolic or semiotic content, perhaps with an ear to making us hear the world differently. The sound artist is a maker, separate from you and I (the audience), they seek out sound in the world and reconstruct it, or they construct from silence, they are composing, tinkering and sculpting.

In contrast, the listening artist foregrounds listening in their practice, and makes listening their work. Often the listening artist is not concerned with making a noise or a sounding object, but rather with making a space, a space made by the strategy of listening they choose to employ, or a space that will encourage that strategy of listening. They accept what occurs in that space and go with the flow of that activity. They focus on listening to and with you, instead of sounding at you. They are not certain, nor seeking certainty. Instead of making they will ask, open up, and wait. They don't make 'the work'; they are a vessel rather than a deliverer. The listening artist seeks to be one of you, with a recognition of both their, and your, difference and commonality.

To articulate this position, I will begin this dialectic text with a seemingly general question, and as the text continues I will, I hope, sharpen, clarify and nuance this proposition.

6. Questions To The Listening Artist

So, to begin, what is the listening artist up to?

They make art. The listening artist is not a counselor, a doctor or a vox-pop interviewer, but they may borrow the methods of these other listeners, as I explored in the previous chapter's application of a business studies researcher's strategies of listening to the project *We Know What We Like.* This art might be sounding, or it might be dialogical - a workshop or a conversation. It could also be a film, a book or a song. The position of the listening artist allows for various material outcomes. Some concrete, some ephemeral, even to the point of immateriality. The listening artist operates in a risky space, with the constant risk of invisibility, the risk of incoherence or the risk of entropy. This is a risk I noted back in 2012 during my Open Studio work but lacked the criticality to understand. I wrote then:

> Listening as a creative act in itself, is hard to pin-down, hard to instruct, and without direction can be an ephemeral mode of engagement that risks falling below the threshold of consciousness. The challenge in creating Open Studio that

engages with sound and listening, is to set up a space that focuses the attentive listener.

I realise now, taking the position of the listening artist, that this 'hard to pin-down' aspect is an inherent quality of the listening artist. Accepting this, and relishing its creative potential becomes generative rather than disappointing. Yet, the listening artist, whilst not necessarily prioritising the creation of sound works, or object and image making, is still engaged in a practice of art making. I argue their listening has an aesthetic. I do not claim any new theory of an aesthetic of listening, that is beyond the scope of this study, I only open it up to discussion.

Why does this position you're outlining need to have an aesthetic?

I take up Clare Bishop's proposition (Bishop, 2012) that there is a problem of an absent aesthetics within participatory practices, of which, I argue, listening is one. I suggest that the listening artist operates within aesthetic modes. Moreover, I argue that a critical discourse around an aesthetics of listening is necessary and pressing. I suggest an aesthetics of listening is something to be taken seriously, to be questioned and to be extended across all practices of listening within the arts. I must be clear here that I am not talking of an aesthetic appreciation of sound explored via listening, as per an aesthetics of music or musical appreciation (see Reese, 1983, Scruton, 1999), rather that listening itself has an aesthetic quality, separate and distinct from any sound. I felt this quality of a listening aesthetic when encountering Oreet Ashery's work (as discussed in Chapter Three). It was her listening that I was drawn to and which offered a sense of being in the presence of an artist taking a listening position.

That listening has 'quality' is something recognised in vernacular reflections on listening: we often speak of an individual being a 'good listener', or of someone 'listening properly'. These are notions also embedded in much discourse around listening explored earlier such as Katherine Norman's writing on the listening employed or engendered when confronted with sound works (Norman 1996). Yet an aesthetics of listening is a nascent field, and it is not well-served by current art critical discourse. Listening requires a prolonged engagement to be fully appreciated. Grant Kester has written about the trouble critics have with dialogical art (see Kester, 2013), and the same could also be said of art where listening is a central aesthetic. Kester first describes the particularity of dialogical art work where 'practice production and reception co-occur, and reception itself is refashioned as a mode of production' (p.10). His claim here resonates with the

notion of a listening aesthetic, both being modes of reception rather than of making. Kester continues, 'the experience of reception extends over time, through an exchange in which the responses of the collaborators result in subsequent transformations in the form of the work as initially presented.' (ibid.) So through the receptive act (in Kester's case dialogue, in our case listening) the work emerges. This is exactly the process I describe in the two works discussed in the previous chapter, *We Know What We Like…* and *Spaceship School*. What constitutes the ground of such an aesthetics is beyond the scope of this study and here I simply propose it as a future area of study for researchers.

Is the listening artist a distinct type of practitioner? Or can anyone be a listening artist?

I am not arguing for the existence of a listening art: that is, of a distinct and new genre. But I am proposing there is such a thing as a listening artist. The listening artist is positional, not absolute. A painter can become a listening artist, a musician can too. It's not a genre: it's a mode of working, but it's not just about method, it's also about the result. The listening artist's works are works of listening, they may be seen, or touched, or read, but they emerge from and embody a practice of listening. And, because the listening artist works in space of sociality and togetherness, that work might as easily be a conversation as an installation, a workshop as easily as a book. This positionality is in relation the listening artist's kin of sound art, and to those with whom the listening artist works - participants collaborators or otherwise – as well as the social, political and environmental context in which they work. Whilst I position the listening artist as operating 'beyond sound art' the practice of the listening artist is constantly nudging against the sound artist, for it is still against sound art that the listening artist is best defined. It's a practice that takes the listening of the sound artist, and augments, critiques and alters it in readiness for use in fields beyond that discipline.

The listening artist understands that listening is a strong and discrete activity (to again borrow Corradi Fiumara's formulation) that often operates with sound, but that has its own ontological and epistemological concerns that need to be understood as separate from the sound. It is also social and dialogic, as explored in the previous chapter. The practice of a listening artist is radical. It collapses the yawning gap between object and subject that modernism proposes, it refutes the incommuncative nihilism of post-modernism and seeks instead dialogue and connection, whilst accepting misunderstanding, antagonism and difference as necessary and valid. The listening artist

can make work that sounds, but it can also manifest in the visual, the textual or the physical, or exist simply in the act of listening itself.

By drawing on Jacques Rancière, Grant Kester and Clare Bishop, as well as Lisbeth Lipari, Jenny Helin and Gemma Corradi Fiumara the listening artist walks a terrain that encompasses socially engaged practice, communications theory and radical approaches to aesthetics and the control of knowledge. The listening artist, when taking this position, uses listening as a generative tool for making as well as an innovative perspective for understanding and accounting for existing practice.

In your comparison, what do you mean by 'a listening criticality'?

I am aware that I am proposing something quite concrete with this position of a listening artist - seemingly a new type of practice - and in this regard, somewhat contradicting the uncertain and vulnerable nature of the figure I am outlining. My proposition is therefore to be constantly underscored by a doubt. As mentioned, the listening artist is a position to adopt, it is not an essentialised and atomist entity, nor is it another 'turn' amongst a wave of others lashing against the shores of contemporary art. Rather I mark out this position as a playful and improvisatory one, and I do this to see what sticks, to notice what is heard and to attend to what might spark further debate and dialogue. I offer this position so that others may listen and offer a response. Indeed, I offer the notion of a listening artist as a means of undermining practice rather creating new forms: by listening I also wish my listening to be concurrently undone. This being a precondition of a listening position. Listening leads us to doubt and undoing. I borrow this notion of 'being undone' from theorist Irit Rogoff who, in her essays 'Smuggling: An Embodied Criticality' (2006) and 'From Criticism to Critique to Criticality' (2003), offers the proposition that the theorist is always undone by the theory, with this undoing being necessary and predicative of such an approach (I discussed Rogoff briefly in the Introduction). The listening artist is a theorist and a practitioner. Their listening is a constant quarry of their work (in addition whatever external aspects their work is concerned with) - the listening artist wishes to understand their listening, to unravel it, to undo it and to make it again. The listening artist is founded on a sense of criticality.

Rogoff argues that a criticality seeks to 'to unravel the very ground on which it stands. To introduce questions and uncertainties in those places where formerly there was some seeming consensus about what one did and how one went about it' (2003b). Moving

beyond the traditional notion of criticism - where experts measure work by its compliance with conventions - and critique - where the artist theorist seeks to reveal the mechanics and structures behind received knowledge and convention - Rogoff suggest that 'criticality…is taking shape through an emphasis on the present, of living out a situation, of understanding culture as a series of effects rather than of causes, of the possibilities of actualising some of its potential rather than revealing its faults.' (2003b). If listening is not an extremely effective means by which these effects are engendered then what is?

As Rogoff notes, such an approach is inherently 'risky', it is 'criticality is therefore connected in my mind with risk, with a cultural inhabitation that performatively acknowledges what it is risking without yet fully being able to articulate it' (ibid. p.2). The listening artist is engaged in a practice of criticality, they constantly seek and strain for new ways of knowing the world, not always by conscious directive, but by the fact of being open to others through their listening, a listening artist yielding, undoing, and channeling the other. They operate in a space that is necessarily doubtful, and sometimes inarticulate. Listening often acts before language, before the formulation of a coherent discourse, so is vulnerable and shaky, but still strong and vital.

Throughout my study I have tried to be honest about those moments where I felt my work was failing, or vulnerable, or on shaky ground - now I accept this as part of the practice I am undertaking.

Can you talk more about the relationship between listening and space?

The work of a listening artist might be a painting, or a film, or a sound work, but it will have emerged from a space of listening. This is an actual space. A space made of people, materials, thresholds and boundaries, and listening. Within the two projects discussed in the previous chapters I spent a lot of time setting up and maintaining these spaces of listening - through dialogue, interviews, warmups, and other methods. The space of listening is therefore designed and utilises different modes and strategies of listening as part of this process of design, as described in the last chapter's analysis of *We Know What We Like…* in the context of Jenny Helin's dialogic listening model, for example, or the use of Pauline Oliveros' Deep Listening strategies in the workshops that made up Spaceship School.

I can offer a deeper illustration of this space-making skill needed by the listening artist

through an analysis of teaching work I conduct at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD).

For the past seven years I have taught on various MA courses at the university, and the trajectory of my teaching has mirrored that of my PhD in its movement from a sound focus to a listening one (Scott, D. 2011-). I began my work there tutoring in sound, sound technology and the aural elements of performance, yet now I teach much more about listening as a mode of developing work, be it sound design, or visual elements such as lighting or set. Moreover, the philosophical underpinnings of scenography, with its concern with bodies and space (see Collins and Nisbet, 2010 and Howard, 2009), have informed by own thinking of sound and listening, and rooted them much more firmly in physical (as in bodily and material) and performative (theatrical or more culturally) space. My work in scenography has informed my understanding of space, and also informed by understanding of listening as something that can create and hold a space. This, I suggest, is a crucial part of the listening artist's practice.

When I teach listening at RCSSD I suggest that listening is a thing in itself, a practice of its own, not merely the handmaiden of sound. Moreover, a practice of listening is one that expands beyond just the sounding and the heard. It becomes a much broader approach to devising, and, because of it is bounded up with space, bodies, and the intersubjective connections between those bodies and the spaces which they inhabit; it becomes a resolutely scenographic approach.

I propose listening as a tool, like a sketchbook or a camera, and I employ all manner of techniques, strategies and tactics in its application, many of which I've discussed in different contexts in previous chapters. And, mostly crucially to this discussion, I argue that listening creates spaces: a particular listening engaged by a particular individual or group (an audience for example) will create a particular type of space. Different listenings create different spaces. The listening of the psychotherapist, the listening of the attentive student or the listening of the political activist all manifest different spaces and spatial configurations. I should reiterate here - I'm not talking about sound. Everything I've described above could apply to silence as much to noise and such listenings can result in an image, a text, a photograph, a movement, or a spatial design.

I'll talk us through a typical workshop. It features a number of techniques and strategies derived from sound art, including the work of Pauline Oliveros, and techniques derived from soundwalking and acoustic ecology, but all employed to service the notion of a

listening practice within design.

Fifteen designers are either moving, or observing other's movements, in a black box studio. The choreography has been developed during an afternoon of careful listening, voicing, mark-making and dialogue. The work creates a new space in the black box, one made by bodies repeating gestures and movements, pacing the borders, reaching up high and stooping low. The work is not a sound piece *per se*, but it is a work, even a space, made by listening.

We began the session with a performance of Pauline Oliveros' 'Environmental Dialogue' (Oliveros. 1974). I often use exercises and scores taken from experimental music and free improvisation, sound art practices, in my scenographic work. They operate as ways of opening up space, focussing one's attention onto the aural and allowing participants the freedom to listen and make sound without the anxiety of having to display musical expertise. Oliveros' work in particular offers much in this regard, and I find in her work an example of a sound art strategy that has the flexibility to operate in spaces beyond sound art, and beyond music. Within this workshop setting we begin by discussing Oliveros' modes of listening. She argues that:

> Two modes of listening exist, focal listening and global listening. Focal listening provides details through concentration on single sounds, whereas global listening provides context through concentration on the entire field of sound. When both modes are utilized and in balance with one another, the listener is in connection with all existence. (Oliveros, 2010, p.74)

'Environmental Dialogue' (1971) is work that attempts to move between these two modes that Oliveros outlines. I introduce the workshop with Oliveros' text score but I embellish it via a form of guided meditation, where I draw attention to the sounds of one's body in the space: breathing, rustling, etc. I then ask the group to attend to the sounds immediately around the body: other people's breath, any movements. Then we move to sounds at the boundaries of the space, then to sounds outside the space and finally to the most distant sounds participants can here. This guided section moves attention through the space: from bodies, to boundaries, to distant and sometimes even imagined sounds.

After this guided section I ask participants to slowly, and very quietly, begin vocalising one of the sounds they heard during the guided section, as and when they feel comfortable,

as per Oliveros' score. Gradually a quiet murmuring of hisses, creaks, gasps and moans emerges from the group. After some time, I encourage the group to increase in volume. Finally, I ask them to begin listening as well to other sounds in the room, and to put their sounds in dialogue with these other sounds. By this point the work has become improvised music, and the sounds made diverge from their initial source and become sounds in themselves in the space. Participants copy each other's sounds as much as the sounds they initially heard. After a little time, I ask the group to gradually draw the sounds back into themselves until we reach silence. We remain silent for some moments and then the piece is complete.

The work draws attention to the existing soundscape of a performance space and can highlight what potential already exists in the space, before speakers, or lights or objects are introduced. It also acts to amplify and humanise these sounds, exploring them as things mediated by the body. Moreover, it's a way for a group to share such an exploration. Due to the way the work is scaffolded, starting with just listening, gradually moving towards sounding, slowly amplifying, it is very inclusive. Participants can contribute as much as they feel comfortable with and, based on my experience with it, it always builds to a joyful and active noise by the end.

Figure 43: Clifford. A. (2015) *Soundmap*

After Oliveros' work I distribute some large sheets of paper and we begin constructing a sound map, drawing on the listening we have just been engaged in. A sound map is a topographical representation of the sounds present in a space (see figure 43). Like any form of cartography, sound maps can be very scientific in their methodology - sound maps exist for noise levels across cities, or to represent animal noises in particular ecosystems - or they can be highly subjective. For our purposes the content and mode of the map is up to the designer. It could represent each sound source - a foot, a car, a fan - or it could represent the grain and density of sounds in the space, or the feelings, associations or memories these sounds engender in the listener. The process is open, but all the maps begin with placing the listener at the centre of the page. The creation of the soundmap offers a space for the particularity of the individual's listening to emerge - it's not intended as an objective act of classification. The maps are always diverse, with some aspects being readable to all members of the group - the "beep beep" of a car horn for example - and others being far more esoteric and personal - half-remembered utterances, an imagined piece of music or memories of similar sounds from childhood.

We then discuss the maps. This dialogue is important as it becomes the first moment of speech during the workshop, and I encourage designers to hold onto the listening focus that has been engendered through the previous activities. These little shifts in attention, from sounding to listening, make the listening approach a rigorous one, even when chatting about a splurge of black ink on a piece of newsprint paper.

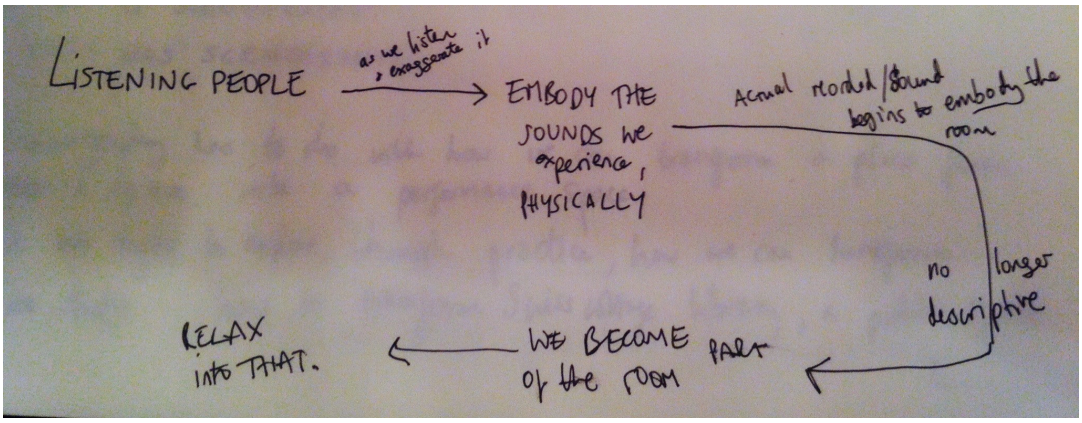

Figure 44: Clifford. A. (2015) *Listening notes*

After talking and listening the scores are circulated amongst the group and designers pair off, taking with them a map made by another member of the group. The focus now shifts

from representing what exists in the space, and in the bodies of those who listened, to using that map as a precursor for a new space. The map becomes a score: it moves from being descriptive to prescriptive. Here those initial listenings become resolutely active and generative. Each pair then spends time re-interpreting the maps as graphic scores, akin to works by twentieth century composers such as Cornelius Cardew, Cathy Berberian or John Cage. I usually give them a duration for the work, but beyond that they can interpret the score as they wish. The form can be dictated as per the needs of the group. The work could be choreography, a sound performance, a spatial configuration of objects. In one workshop, which I co-ran with scenographer Sophie Jump, participants devised silent movement pieces from the map/scores which were performed individually, and then en masse, culminating in a circus-like reimagining of the black box space, full of bodies and new spatial potentials in motion. In this case the work was 'silent' (although alive with the accidental sound of feet walking, clothes brushing, breath and all the rest) but it came from the in-depth listening of the previous activities. The movement of bodies created a new space, new spatial imaginings of that black box, all derived from careful and reflexive listening. Through this process, the listening artist makes space.

I suggest to students that the listening position can often be at odds with a working life where, all too often, the high-pace, time-short process of devising, making and performing does not allow for such expansive and speculative moments of reflection and creation. So much of production is sounding - talking, offering opinion, the bang and clatter of making - and doesn't afford space for a careful listening to occur. This requires trust and time. I don't suggest all these techniques are novel or revolutionary in themselves (some are common in devising workshop scenarios), rather than a more prolonged and 'deep' engagement with listening can become a radical way of working when used as the primary approach for design. Such an approach can inform visual design as much as the aural and, as outlined above, it can lead to movement, to light, to narrative and beyond. Moreover, it can shift the interpersonal relationships of those involved in a production from hierarchies of speaker to listener, and towards more open, dialogical interactions.

So, these workshops are both an education in becoming a listening artist, and also a strand of my own work when I, as convener and facilitator, am a listening artist at work.

So, is the workshop, or pedagogy more generally, a part of the listening artist's work?

Yes, and I argue the workshop space is more than 'just' a pedagogical space. It might be the listening artist is swept up in what has been called the 'educational turn' in contemporary art practice - that is the embrace of educational technique and spaces as a form of art practice. This tendency has been explored with criticality and rigour in *Curating and the Educational Turn* (2009), edited by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, which reacts to a growing number of artists using the spaces of education - the lecture, the workshop, the seminar, the symposium - as grounds for their practice. In the introduction the editors note how 'these discursive interventions and relays have become central to contemporary practice; they have now become the main event' (p.2).

The educational turn offers artists potential new modalities and paradigms to work within, but it also allows us to look at the work of innovative educators in an altered light. I am not suggesting that all teachers are now artists, that would be a grand claim and logical fallacy, but I do suggest we can look at the work of innovative educators with our aesthetic sensibility (in this case the sensibility of a listening aesthetic) and find relevant and inspiring practice that can inform the position of the listening artist, deepening its criticality.

I offer the example of Nicole Brittingham Furlonge, an educator and writer who has placed listening at the centre of both her pedagogy and her literary analysis. Her work contains an aesthetic, pedagogical and political appreciation of listening. Her writings resonate with the ideas of Cristina Rinaldi and the Reggio Emilio movement (discussed in Chapter One) and offer approaches for using listening as a pedagogical tool for exploring literature, and more broadly, for engaging with the world. Furlonge asks in an article written for the Sounding Out! blog, 'how can listening, which I've come to understand as an essential way of knowing, enhance the learning experience?' (Furlonge, 2013). In response to this she offers a range of listening, including sound walks, experiments with the sonic qualities of materials and objects, exploring both their sonic character and the 'sonic cultural significance' (ibid.) of these objects. Such practices enrich her use of listening as a means of analysing literature. In all cases her listening highlights the situatedness of the listener in both a physical and social space. Ultimately, she suggests these listening practices are a means of overcoming fixed mindsets through developing a sonic and listening literacy. Like Ultra-Red, Furlonge uses strategies of listening only as far as they are relevant to the context of the listener - social, political, identity or otherwise. And, echoing Lipari, she advocates for a holistic listening that connects the specificities of a literary text with the wider world in which the student listens, hears and inhabits.

I suggest that in her teaching work and in her writing, Furlonge is taking a listening position, one that can be inspiring to the listening artist. Her position is one of criticality, one very apparent in her academic writing. Her essay on Ralph Ellison's novel *The Invisible Man* offers an innovative approach to literary analysis (Furlonge, 2014) which accounts for both the listening within the work and how listening is a means of engaging with the work. I won't go into depth about Furlonge's innovative exploration of Ellison's protagonist (focusing on the heard rather than the seen shifts the whole sensorial modality set up by Ellison's title, for example), but I will note that such an approach, beyond its pedagogical value, also suggests listening as a powerful tool of resistance with regards issues of race in America. She writes:

> I advocate for a critical practice of listening that allows for consideration of sonic reception and for listening as a fully embodied process, one that is not isolated in the ear, but is instead perceived, dispersed, and experienced throughout the body. How one listens can intimately structure experiences of 'race' and the construction of racialized subjects. (p.1)

Furlonge concludes her essay with a description of listening that seems to encapsulate the ambitions of the listening I am concerned with. For Furlonge, listening is more than individual perception, it is a complex and often antagonistic dialogue with a wider cultural and social milieu:

> Listening is an art, a conscious process of observing and defining sound. And like the art of writing, it is affected by one's place in and knowledge of a particular sonic environment as much as one's previous experiences with sonic forms. Recognising both resonances and dissonances as cultural and individual are key to what we consider critical sonic literacy. (2013)

Furlonge's recognition of 'one's place in' and one's 'previous experiences of' sonic forms highlight the sociality of listening, and the complex networks of class, race, economics, privilege, and so on, that listening operates within. Also, by noting both the cultural and individual aspects of listening Furlonge echoes Ultra-Red's notion (as well as the work of Christine Hume, who we will discuss below) of a dialectical listening, where inner and outer worlds are in constant dialogue, a listening that moves beyond the individual and towards a socially-engaged listening mode.

So, can anyone be a listening artist? Can a sound artist be a listening artist too?

Yes - here's an example. Brenda Hutchinson is a composer and socially-engaged artist who originally studied with Pauline Oliveros. She describes her work as 'socially based improvisations and encounters' (Hutchinson, 2017) and a signature work is her series of sonic portraits, which she suggests as 'aural pictures' of people and situations. Hutchinson's work is sounding, but imbued with a sense of listening to others and to sound and listening in a social context. In her 2015 article 'Sound, Listening and Public Engagement', she explores the listening in her work and suggests it is a form of social engagement that takes its cues from her work as an improvising musician. She begins with a proposal:

> The common thread and basis of my publicly engaged practice is experiential, strongly predicated on working with sound as a musician. This is not to say that one needs to be a musician to work in this way, but it has made it possible for me because of my training in listening to sound as a musician and my lifelong practice as a performing musician engaged with sound as an immersive, physical, experiential medium. My proposal is to insert the idea of experiential practice into socially engaged art, defining and discussing it as it relates to the medium of sound and the development of work through listening. (Hutchinson, 2015 n.p.)

I would argue that Hutchinson, when working in this publicly-engaged mode, is taking the position of a listening artist. Hutchinson's methodology is to use practices of listening derived from music and explore them in a social situation, one in which listening is already present, but perhaps not utilising the specific strategies of listening that Hutchinson is seeking to engage: strategies that will not only be novel to participants but may also lead to a deeper, more holistic listening experience. Hutchinson touches upon an aestheticisation of the present moment through the act of listening: 'Through these experiences with the ephemeral, time-based medium of sound, people may understand something about interacting with others that's possible only in this way, leading to previously unconsidered conceptual, aesthetic, and relational possibilities' (ibid.).

Figure 45: Unknown. n.d. Accessed: 2017, *Image of Brenda Hutchinson*

Hutchinson begins by outlining her practice of recording oral testament, and her fidelity to the intention and spirit of that original moment of recording in any subsequent use of the recording. She puts listening at the centre of her practice where 'the focus on the interpersonal relationship itself is not the means, but the end. The goal of the act is to develop intimacy and openness among people' (ibid.). Her shift of 'ends' to the encounter itself strongly echoes Kester's position outlined in previous chapters. It also resonates with Jenny Helin's writing on dialogic listening (see Chapter Four), where the listener – in her case in the role of interviewer – as present and visible (or audible) in a work as the speaker. Such intimacy and openness are achieved through a careful 'listening to time' (ibid.). She argues that 'an even closer examination and experiential relationship with sound itself…expands what is possible in the realm of direct social engagement by focusing on time and perceptible time-based relationships' (ibid.). This sensitivity to experience unfurling over time she suggests is one that musicians have a deep understanding of. A sensitivity to timbre, pitch, rhythm, as well as the 'these relationships (and the recognition of them) can create and occupy an area of mutual, shared recognition and an improvisatory field of interaction' (ibid.).

Hutchinson's exploration of her practice offers a fascinating and concrete example of listening practices from one field, in this case music, being applied to a situation that is rooted in sociality. Moreover, it opens and up extends the notion of listening. As she

notes the listening reflects 'the intimacy of interaction: Listening is intimate. When considering the unamplified voice, it requires proximity. We need to be physically close to one another in order to hear and be heard. It is personal' (ibid.).

Hutchinson here offers an intimate listening, one based on proximity to the Other, but also one informed by a musical understanding of time, and of spending time with other people and a human-scale context.

Hutchinson seems to bridge the sound art and participatory art communities and their praxis. So, is sound art returning to your work? Is it no longer 'beyond sound art' as you discussed in the previous chapter?

For the past two years (starting in April 2015) I've been exploring improvised sound and music in a participatory setting via a project called Athelstan Sound (Scott, D. 2015-). I convene the group at an artist-led studio complex in Margate and it has been running since March 2015. The idea behind Athelstan Sound was to create a space in Margate for people working with or interested in sound and listening to gather, listen and play together. The sub-heading for the event is 'Experiments in sound and listening'. I was very keen for the sessions not to be bound by ideas of musicality, musicianship or expertise, and the sessions are billed as 'open to everyone'. Over the past two years a wide range of people have attended, from practising electroacoustic composers, to rock musicians, to children, to non-musicians, including a jeweller based at the studio who brought her tools along as sound-making devices.

Figure 46: Cavaliere, L. (2017) *Athelstan Sound workshop*

This project may appear somewhat anomalous at this stage in my research as it is, in part, a return to sounding, and brings listening back to a resolutely sound art and musical space. However, my thinking behind Athelstan Sound has been informed and guided by taking the position of the listening artist. My role in convening Athelstan Sound is much more akin to the listening artist statements outlined at the opening of this chapter distinguishing the listening artist from the sound artist. Within Athelstan Sound I hold the space, I listen, I remain open and allow all voices to be heard (at least, I try my best to do this).

Initial sessions were structured around small games, scores and provocations that I brought to the group. These included excerpts from drummer and bandleader John Stevens' *Search and Reflect* (Stevens 1985/2007), Pauline Oliveros' text scores, often taken from her Sonic Meditations text and simple games I had devised myself. The sessions rely on improvisation as the guiding principle, and even when we have worked with scores, they have been relatively open and readable to individuals with no experience of traditional notation scores.

Figure 47: Deakin, J. (2015) *Athelstan Sound workshop*

For the first year sessions often began with a rendition of John Steven's *Click Piece*. The work consists of three simple rules: firstly, to make the shortest note possibility on your instrument (whatever that may be), secondly not to play at the same time as someone else, and thirdly to avoid long gaps. Whilst elegant and simple in its provocation, it is a piece that demands a careful and attentive listening to the group, acting as a useful warmer for the rest of the session. As David Toop notes on playing the piece at Stevens' workshops, 'the piece seemed to develop with a mind of its own and almost as a by-product, the basic lesson of improvisation - how to listen and how to respond - could be learned through a careful enactment of the instructions' (Toop, 2001). *Click Piece* requires a focused presence in the space on the part of the performer, and this presence, and then listening, creates the work. The piece is also incredibly accessible, it can be performed on any instrument by anybody. The piece is about making sound, but my use of *Click Piece* is moving the piece beyond its original intention of being about playing music, and towards a 'listening' rather than 'sounding' position within the work.

John Stevens' ideas, outlined in *Search and Reflect,* a collection of improvisation and listening games, have had a significant influence on how Athelstan Sound is run.[1] Stevens ran improvisation workshops through the 1960s and 70s and in 1983 he formed the

[1] One regular at Athelstan Sound actually attended a number of Steven's workshops in the mid 70s and was also a member of a group that released an LP on the LMC label.

organisation Community Music with Dave O'Donnell. Community Music was setup to provide music opportunities for young people who may not have access to formal training and included workshops that were continuation of his 1970s workshops. CM still exists, 22 years after Stevens' death, and has supported artists such as Courtney Pine and the Asian Dub Foundation in the early stages of their careers. In a 1987 interview with musician Richard Scott, listed on Scott's website, Stevens expands on his notion of the collective:

> I had a real passion for this non-performance type approach… it was, like, everything but being impressive… And I used to go, 'It's not really important what I play or how I sound it's what I'm attempting, the way I'm attempting to integrate myself'. I used to feel that where I'd like someone to say, 'Oh, that was well played!' was the recognition of how I maybe managed to integrate myself so totally at a certain point in the playing that it became one, that I couldn't be identified as an individual because I was so involved in what it was. (Stevens, 1987)

The 'non-performance type approach' is central to the Athelstan Sound sessions - there is no audience and all present are expected to participate (see figures 46 and 47). With regards my role as the convener (taking the position of the listening artist who is making a space), Stevens' comments resonate: I am keen to 'integrate myself' and not be 'identified as an individual because I was so involved in what it was'. To achieve the later I have encouraged the group to act more as a collective than a taught workshop or directed rehearsal group. Different members lead sessions and we also encourage practitioners from outside the group to lead sessions. In this regard Athelstan Sound occupies a position in my work as a crossover between sound art and dialogical art, drawing on the concerns and ethics of the latter to organise the former. At a structural level Athelstan Sound puts sound art and dialogical or participatory practice into a dialogue with each other. But I should also note that, as the group is amorphous and self-organised, this ontological interpretation of the group is my own. Other members may disagree.[1]

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[1] This was the case during a performance at the Turner Contemporary when a member said, rather derisively "Oh, so are we a community music group then?" I understood the term as a compliment!

Ultimately, for me, Athelstan Sound is a space for listening. I spend much of each session enjoying being with people in sound; we are listening together. It is an intimate, 'human-scale' space, and one full of possibility. Returning to the listenings discussed in Brenda Hutchinson's work, Athelstan Sound contains an intimate listening, and a sociality where sound and listening sit within a wider network of social and cultural meaning, as well as a listening where doubt, mishearing and failure are necessary contingencies within each session.

An unexpected development in Athelstan Sound is the emergence of an Athelstan Sound Ensemble, a more traditional performance group. It was formed after we began receiving requests to perform live. To date we have performed at Turner Contemporary in Margate, Free Range in Canterbury and the Contrapop Festival in Ramsgate. This development has sharpened my sense of the difference between a performing group and the 'non-performative' aspect of the Athelstan Sound workshops. The performance wing of Athelstan Sound operates in a more traditional manner: we learn pieces or perform improvisation. I find the work of the group much less exciting than the contents of the workshops, in part because the focus becomes performance, rather than the 'non-performative' space of the workshop. Moreover, this performance space becomes one of sounding rather than listening.

The work of listening artist seems diverse and sometimes messy - what skills do they need to navigate this terrain?

The listening artist must learn to remain in doubt, always on the verge of transformation, and always able to transform again. This is part of the position's criticality and part of its aesthetic. This criticality is partly a function of the ability of a listening artist to exist in a negatively-capable space, and to use the strategy of a negatively capable listening. I borrow the term negative-capability listening from the poet Christine Hume (see Hume, 2012), and I will discuss her work in more depth below.

Negative-capability is a term derived from a letter John Keats wrote to his brothers in 1817 in which he writes 'negative capability [is] when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason' (Keats, 1817/1958/2012, pp.193-194). Negative-capability is a flexible concept, and perhaps due to Keats' brevity on the concept, it has been taken up and developed by a number of writers including, perhaps most recently and memorably, by Rebecca Solnitz,

in *A Field Guide To Getting Lost* (2010). When applied to listening, negative-capability doesn't deny a desire to seek, to understand or make sense, rather it denotes a listening that can exist, critically, within doubt and uncertainty, remaining operative and generative. It becomes a strategy for the listening artist.

The poet Christine Hume's work explores voice, listening and sound, concerns born, in part, from her own childhood experiences of silencing and interior listening. She writes, 'to speak, actually aloud, was often forbidden when I was a child … My voice doesn't come when you call or go where I send it. It's haphazard, serrated, bunched, unruly. It is physically interior, like a mobile, leaky, contorted organ' (Hume, 2014). This deep-rooted sensitivity to sound, and to its 'other side' of listening, and to sound and listening's sociality, even through her early anti-social experiences of voice, is viscerally present in her essay 'Carla Harryman's *Baby*: Listening In, Around, Through, and Out' (Hume in Rankin, Sewell ed. 2012) in which she offers listening as a means of navigating through Carla Harryman's poem *Baby* (Harryman, 2005). She outlines a negative-capability listening as one that 'is equally creative and critical' adding that 'the reader of Baby must feel comfortable with this kind of listening' (Hume, 2012, p.2).

I suggest that Hume is a manifestation of the listening artist, both in her poetic writing and her critical work. Here I linger less on the subject of Hume's analysis - Harryman's *Baby* - and more on her ability to use listening as a means of understanding the work. Hume writes:

> In *Baby,* listening relies not on stringing together singular voices in an unbroken sequence or in streamlining noise, but rather on trafficking in polyvocality. Harryman reinscribes listening with both somatic impact and ethical response. She endows listening with the capacity to undo binary structures in the service of a relational model of identity. (p.1)

Hume's negative-capability listening is poetic, but also pragmatic. It's a listening that doesn't seek to judge nor hold to account. The role of doubt in listening has been explored within sound art theory. Salomé Voegelin's work is often premised on a listening that is contingent and fluid, one that is open to experience and mutable. Yet Voegelin's listening is, as discussed previously, not social in its formulation. The notion of a negative-capability listening is one that recognises and seeks to confront the doubt and ambiguity present in inter-personal relationships and social encounter.

For Hume, 'listening is a cultural, rather than natural, practice, one which must be learned' (p.1) and that 'listening informs Baby's creation in every way, meshing internal and external worlds of the book' (p.1). Hume takes the reader through a range of listening modes and strategies that seek to account for listening in Harryman's poem, and to offer the reader means of engaging with the work through listening. Taken together Hume's formulations of listening are ones that seeks to reside in a listening between people rather than an individual to a sound source. The essay is, I suggest, one where Hume adopts the position a listening artist engaged in an encounter of criticality with another artist's work.

Isn't all this a bit vague and open to interpretation? How does it relate to your claim in the last chapter that the listening you're discussing is all about communication and intelligibility? Surely ambiguity and doubt would work against this?

One might think this mode of being forecloses the possibility of communication that the dialogical art, and dialogic listening, explored in the previous chapter might seek. After all is communication not partly predicated on a successful transfer of meaning from speaker to listener? Negative-capability, in contrast, seems to privilege uncertainty and doubt. However, it may offer a more nuanced and open communicability that allows for ambiguity and contradiction, one that more humanely reflects the reality of communality. A negatively-capable listening is, like Hume's voice, a 'haphazard', 'unruly' and 'a mobile…contorted' listening. It is able to rest in ambiguity.

We can find parallels and support for Hume's observations and hearings in Paul Carter's essay 'Ambiguous Traces: Mishearing, and Auditory Space' (Carter, 2001). Carter calls for an acoustemological[1] understanding of the destruction of the world's bio- and cultural diversity, arguing for a more nuanced understanding of cross-cultural communication and for more dialogue between academic disciplines on this subject. His arguments rest on a call for an understanding of communication not as the simple transferal of information but as a necessarily ambiguous practice of continual self- and other- making. Carter writes how 'ambiguity is unavoidable in even the best regulated systems of communication, where it is defined as a property of undecidability between two or more possible meanings'

[1] A term borrowed from Steve Feld's work on sound and listening amongst the Kaluli community in Papua New Guinea (Feld, 1982).

(n.p). Carter evokes the work of anthropologist Roy Wagner and Wagner's exploration of echolocation within human interaction. Wagner proposes an echolative aspect to sociality where speaking and listening, and misunderstanding, all operate as means of locating oneself in a social space. Moreover, such a form of listening recognises that communication is never neutral, and always subject to the interventions, distortions and ambiguities of the situation. Such ambiguity, according to Carter 'is the condition of a knowledge that cannot be represented, an auditory knowledge that is constitutionally environmental and situational' (n.p). Carter offers, in his affirmation of the ambiguous, and his discussion of echo-locative listening, examples of the negative-capability at play within listening, and their crucial role within communication. This model of listening places ambiguity at the heart of communication, and recognises it as contingent on the context of hearing.

Returning to Hume, she further nuances her incomplete and uncertain listening with the term 'gestalt listening,' where the hearer fills in gaps in meaning to create a coherent hole. Hume writes, '*Baby*'s half-oral, half-literary style, which privileges the unfinished, the unsaid, and the suggested, is a tribute to and validation of gestalt listening as a primary mode of communication' (p.2.) Hume describes these various modes and strategies as permutations of what she terms a 'dialectical listening' (ibid.). These are listenings that connect inner and outer worlds, dialoguing between the individual and the social.

Hume's catalogue of listenings within the poem are generative and resolutely social, they account for listenings between people, but within the aesthetic practice of poetry. The ability to rest in doubt is one that discourages prejudice or discrimination. It's a strategy for hearing the other without jumping to judgement. But it also allows for play and mishearing, for humour and wilful misinterpretation. It allows for listening to have ironic aspects that phenomenological models of listening almost disallow. Moreover, the foregrounding of listening as a dialectic process, one of back and forth, back and forth (*pace* Helin), from inside to outside, keeps it dynamic and networked in the world, rather than reduced to a unilateral signal-chain from speaker to listener.

So, does this 'negatively-capable' aspect manifest in your work?

This negatively-capable condition of a listening criticality was something I experienced, and actively sought, in a recent performance and text work entitled *Unpacking the Invisible*

Knapsack: A Remix[1] (Scott. 2016c).

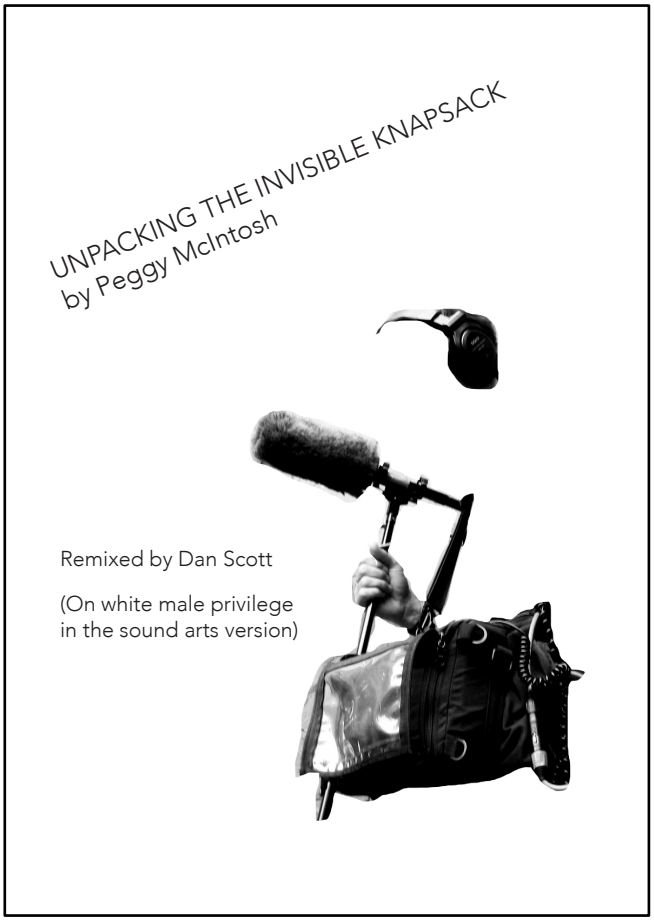

Figure 48: Scott, D. (2016) *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack: A Remix (Booklet Cover)*

To take the position of a listening artist means recognising one's own position within the social context in which one is operating. The listener is as embedded in the dialogic encounter as the speaker. A listening artist can no longer be a neutral and atomistic conduit for sound to pass through - like the microphone of the field recordist - they must own up to their own listening and account for it. They must undo their listening and expose it to possibility and alternative readings.

Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack: A Remix was a re-writing of Peggy McIntosh's influential essay, 'White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack' (McIntosh, 1989) a text that offered up examples of white privilege encountered by McIntosh as a white woman working in academia in the late 1980s. My version was the same text altered to reflect my own situation of privilege within sound art, working as a white male, and was made

[1] See USB file '13 Unpacking The Invisible Knapsack.pdf'.

with the permission and guidance of McIntosh herself. The performance was a symptom of my own personal reaction to excavating and understanding those ways of listening that I felt sound art failed to appreciate, those other approaches that have informed this and the previous two chapters. I was also inspired by the candour of Krista Ratcliffe in her book, *Rhetorical Listening* (2005), in which she analyses the networks of white privilege embedded in cultures of listening within academia and other areas of American public life, critically reflecting on her own privilege within these networks.

The work was made for the conference White Noise: Sound Gender Feminism Activism, organised by CRiSAP with artist and scholar Holly Ingleton in 2016. The conference itself reflects a growing awareness and interrogation of the limits of much sound art praxis, and is informed and driven by work by feminist, queer, and black practitioners and their allies. SGFA (which has been running for six years now) is symptomatic of an emerging and politicised sound art, one that roots practices of sounding and listening in a social context and builds on the deeper political interrogation of sound and listening discussed in the previous chapter.

Figure 49: Bradley, F. (2016) *Twitter response to Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack: A Remix*

The piece operated as a performative summation of (as of late 2016) the direction my approach to listening took post-2014. Aspects of my work outlined in Chapter One, as well as a combination of intuition and subsequent research on listening beyond sound art (explored in the last chapter and this one) led me to the realisation that listening is positional. I now conclude that listening is intersectionally informed by the materiality of race, gender, class, sexuality and other factors that would fall under the rubric of identity. In *Unpacking…* I suggest the position of the listener, within sound art, and of a listening art, is one of privilege. For example, the artist is afforded the time and space to record, with technology that doesn't come cheap. Moreover, to be allowed to listen, to be the one demanding, allowing, affording, sometimes coercing sound, is to be granted permission to hear, but it can also be a position that is not then allowed to answer back - from where do these permissions come? What agency grants it?

The performance itself was both awkward and liberating[1]. I was aware of both voicing a reality I felt needed to be recognised (that I was privileged in my sounding and listening) and also of a clunkiness in the manner of presentation. I was satisfied with this, the work was a vessel, and I was too, for all number of uncomfortable realities - I did not want the work to be smooth, accomplished or final. It's a partial attempt to account for my own listening history. But it's a case of being undone by listening. I wanted to feel insecure and challenged. I intend the work to be one of a listening criticality.

Unpacking… is one attempt at recognising and confronting these issues. The piece itself was crafted through a series of listenings I made to sound practitioners who were female, and, in some cases, of colour. I didn't want to produce the work as much as listen it into being. The piece emerged from these dialogues and was shaky and partial.

What does a listening artist's work look like?

I would like to explore the work of an artist to articulate this. I have already described my own projects as ones in which I take the position of the listening artist, and I've also explored the work of Brenda Hitchinson, Christine Hume and Nicole Brittingham Furlonge. Now I offer the work of Rajni Shah as an example of an artist being, or taking the position of, the listening artist. She does not use the term to describe her work, but

[1] The presentation is available online at https://vimeo.com/209414425/c01d4bbc21

here, like above, I offer the term as a means of accounting for the practice of others, as well as a position to adopt for my own work.

Rajni Shah's work explores listening as an improvisatory, ambiguous, negatively-capable and intimate practice. Her work often operates at the edges of that ambiguous space between art and the 'life' that surrounds it, and manifests what Rancière calls 'encounters'. Her work is also explicit in its desire to create 'spaces' for people - audience and performer - to operate within. A work like 2007's *Performing Meditation* is indicative. For the work Shah spent two days in a gallery space in Glasgow meditating, but meditating for, or with, an audience:

> I asked myself: is it possible to meditate as performance or will I simply be performing meditation? The two seemed to be opposites, one actively demanding attention and the other giving it away. But as it turned out, I was able to enter a completely meditative state within the warmth of other bodies. I don't think that I was 'performing meditation'. Instead, other people became a part of the space I had created, so the very act of giving and taking meant that they and I were creating a space together. My presence felt more like a catalyst, a license for others to create their own space, leave their own trace, their thoughts and objects. (Shah, 2007, p.6)

I was very interested in Shah's exploration the apparently insular and passive act of meditating as an active performative mode that creates a space for an audience to engage with. Meditating also seemed very close to the act of listening. Shah's action becomes a licence for others to experience a similar subjectivity thereby 'creating a space together'. Shah's commitment to the personal act of meditation in fact allows others to find their own space within the invitation she offers. Increasingly her work has actually foregrounded listening, and it was this that attracted me to be a participant in her project *Lying Fallow* that ran throughout Autumn 2014 to Summer 2015. The invitation read:

> We are sharing this invitation with a range of people from different backgrounds, specialisms, and interests. You may have come across it in a number of different ways. If you are drawn to the project, please read on to find out more about how you might become involved. If you know someone else who you think would be interested, please pass this invitation on.

> How might alert quietude, not knowing, and listening be seen as spaces of change, rigour, and possibility?
> Where and how might the idea of 'lying fallow' be actualised and given value within contemporary society?
> What becomes possible in those times when it may seem to the outside world as if we are doing or producing nothing?
> (Lying Fallow, 2014)

Shah places great importance on the invitation to a work. During the twelve-month run of *Lying Fallow* we met on three occasions, in three different sites across London. The first gathering was at Hackney City Farm (see figure 50) and began with one hour of silence, or as Shah introduced it, an hour of just being together. The session was transformative for me for a number of reasons. The most curious was during that first hour of 'doing nothing'. Due to the initial silence created by Shah's invitation, I took a listening position. I sat and listened out into the world. I heard the cafe next door, I heard shuffling of feet and bodies in the space, I heard the hum and thrum of the city outside. The room acquired a tangible climate of listening. But I was also aware that, when some members started talking, offering reflections, that my focus on listening, and not speaking, began to be problematic. The listening was necessary, but it was a necessary beginning to dialogue. It was a barrier to communication: I had to speak. This was a profound realisation for me, that listening can be fetishised as much as speaking - perhaps I had moved to far into what Fiumara called, 'the other side of language'.

Figure 50: Shah, R. (2015) *Images from Lying Fallow*

I interviewed Rajni in 2016 and suggested the proposition that a listening practice, or a listening art, could be distinguished from other forms of sound work. For Shah the notion draws together various threads of her practice, from the act of bringing people together to the politics inherent in any work that adopts a collaborative or participatory mode:

> It really resonates for me I think in terms of my practice generally. It feels like a

> subtle distinction but also a really big and important one. What's interesting to me about that is also then where that work sits in a world that is capitalist and that is driven by product and that is driven by creating things and putting them out there. That's how you get noticed and acknowledged. I would be interested in those practices that are about listening. I think it comes back to the thing that I said about Lying Fallow. They're spaces of resistance, actually. I'm interested in how that ties into a kind of bigger politics but also ethics. For me, the thing that happens is holding a space where listening can happen. What does it mean to really begin from that place and to hold that place. Gemma Corradi Fiumara writes about it in a beautifully philosophical way, but I'm also interested in how that meets the world. What does that actually look like? (Shah in interview with Scott, 2016b)

In a sense Shah's desire to find out what a listening space is also echoes Jean Luc Nancy's question, 'what does it mean to be all ears?' (See Nancy, 2012). It suggests a space of listening is possible and is something generative. The notion of listening being an act of resistance brings us back to Kester and Rancière's ideas explored earlier in Chapter Three. In Shah's case resistance is not in the form of a work that evades meaning or appropriation in the manner of the avant-garde art object, but rather through creating a mode of expression and communication that goes beyond the superficial and/or exploitative relationships engendered by capitalist modes of labour. Shah's listening is also an affirmation of 'non-productive', even 'non-performative' spaces. Here her listening becomes negatively-capable, enacting and existing within ambiguity and doubt. Shah also suggests that such spaces are not redundant or unproductive, but manifest positive outcomes that are undervalued in other areas of contemporary life: her listening spaces 'meet the world' and produce *something*, however intangible at first glance.

A recent project, conducted as part of her PhD work, is entitled *Experiments in Listening* (see figure 51) and it explores listening more directly. Shah's website describes it thus:

> For each dialogue, Rajni invited another performance-maker who is also a friend to be in a room with her for a week. The invitation she made was to 'explore the space between us as friends and performance-makers'. This invitation was made in order to explore a space of listening somewhere between the familiar and the performative. Each residency was also accompanied by two sets of audiences: a live audience who were present for the final moments of the week, and a filmmaker

> who was present in whatever way they chose to be during the week-long dialogue. The resulting films...are three distinctly personal responses to the week-long dialogues, capturing moments of laughter, intimacy, frustration, confrontation, silence, dance, and indeed love.
> (Shah in interview with Scott, 2016b)

The proposition of a listening somewhere between the familiar and the performative is a provocative one: it suggests that listening is constructed, and not essentialised. The notion of being invited to listen also suggests that listening is something one can resist or accept, allowing some agency on the part of the would-be listener. But it also affords the 'non-productive' space to flourish and be explored. As she notes:

> It was very much this idea of going into a space with somebody and saying, "There's nothing that needs to come out of this space. We're not creating anything together." Very similar to Lying Fallow in that way, that it's a non-productive space. There's nothing that needs to be achieved. We might just sit in a space in silence for a week or we might run around for a week. Anything. In the invitation I was very clear that I wanted us to try and begin only, and this is impossible, but to begin only from the space that was between us at the beginning of that week.
> (ibid.)

Figure 51: Shah, R. (2016) *Images from Experiments in Listening*

Shah's choice of collaborator was considered and Shah was very aware of the vulnerability of the situation and how a space made by listening was a delicate one to maintain. This is also an intimate listening and one made in dialogue. Shah realised that creating such a place needs a commitment from any others involved:

> It was really important to me to do those dialogues with people who were friends

> and performance makers. Also, as performance makers whose practice somehow overlapped with this interest that I have in listening, I suppose in the space of listening. I thought about doing them with people that I knew less well, and I just think that the work ... I don't know, it's pretty complicated. The work that you have to do in order to get to that place where you can start by listening is quite complicated. (ibid.)

Shah also notes that there were layers of listening occurring in the work. Firstly, in the case of the filmmaker who was documenting the "performance". This role required a de-centred listening, a listening that was not about monitoring or being a viewer, but more about being part of the dialogue playing out:

> One of the things that I've become really aware of through that project and then through the films that were created, is another listening which happened through a filmmaker who was in the room for the week, but in any way that they wanted to be in, and who then made a film very much from their perspective. It was also that one of the things that became apparent were all of the other structures and pressures that influence who we are and who we are with other people. Those go with things around kind of sociological things like gender and race and you know. In a way, that was really unexpected to me. I didn't know ... I went into the project with out any preconceptions about what would happen. (ibid.)

The process also alerted Shah to how listening is never 'clean', but instead is contingent on the identity, background and intersubjective relationship of the interlocutors; those "sociological things" she referred to earlier. In this regard this is a dialectic listening, one that moves between subject and a community of subjects:

> In a way, I realised what I was trying to do with the project was to almost create a kind of clean space where we were in a room, the same room that we would come back to for a week. In a way I was trying to create this very clean slate so that we could just listen and see what that brought up, but of course what it brought up was that it's never a clean space (ibid.).

Here we find an awareness of listening extending beyond the phenomenological and into the messiness of the social. To continue Shah's metaphor, all her listeners brought their own 'dirt' to the experience, meaning a clean slate was never possible. Moreover, it opens

up listening to becoming a non-sonic process - in this case in the "listening" of the film maker. I asked her how listening could be understood in the case of the filmmaker, using a primarily visual medium. I asked Shah if listening a metaphor in this case or something more:

> It's a really good question and it's one that I keep telling myself I need to address. I think I'm a little bit loose with it, but at the same time it's ... I think listening feels like exactly the right word to me. Sometimes if I tell people I'm doing a PhD on listening, they imagine a totally different thing from what I'm doing. I think what I mean by listening is attention. Giving over attention. ... This might make sense or it might not make sense at all to you, but one of the things that I've been interested in (ibid.).

I find in Shah an ally in terms of a faith in listening as a form of practice. Shah's suggestion that there is an artistry in 'holding a space' and seeing what will happen is provocative and novel. For me her work provides concrete examples of a 'space made by listening'. Shah is a listening artist whose work is based in a dialogic listening - emerging from encounters with people, and also in an intimate and improvised listening, requiring proximity and a willingness to play.

So, what about the modes and strategies you talked about in Chapter One? Are they still relevant?

I now have a more playful, but more rigorous understanding of their efficacy. Modes or strategies, techniques or protocols, are there to be employed when the listening demands it, not to be imposed or fetishized. Moreover, as accounts of listening they are to be viewed with criticality as much as embraced. Listening should undo as much as it brings together. For me the position goes some way to resolving my concerns and insecurities about my practice, about the apparent discontinuity between my sound work, my teaching, my socially-engaged work and my engagement with critical discourses around these three strands. As my work is not so esoteric as to only make sense to me, it logically follows that my findings and proposals will also help others navigate these terrains. With many artists operating in the territories I have walked, and many utilising similar skills and techniques, I hope this work is useful and finds purchase in the messy world of practice.

5.4 Conclusion: The Position Of The Listening Artist

The position of the listening artist may read initially as a generalist one. One may ask, surely all sound artists listen? Or, surely any artist working with people listens? But I hope, through the exposition above, and through the journey I've described over the preceding chapters, that it is something nuanced and particular. The listening artist is a position that any practitioner can adopt, but it is also something that can only be adopted with rigour, understanding and criticality. It is not a tokenistic or atomist procedure, it requires constant vigilance and reflexivity and engagement with others. It is also a practice that remains in dialogue with sound art, but which also speaks to other forms of artistic practice.

I am keen to share these ideas more generally. I am also keen to gather practitioners together who operate in this way and discuss the viability and efficacy of this proposal. As with any research, this six years of practice seems to constitute the beginning of a conversation rather than the end. This seems fitting: having heard me out, I am ready now to listen to you.

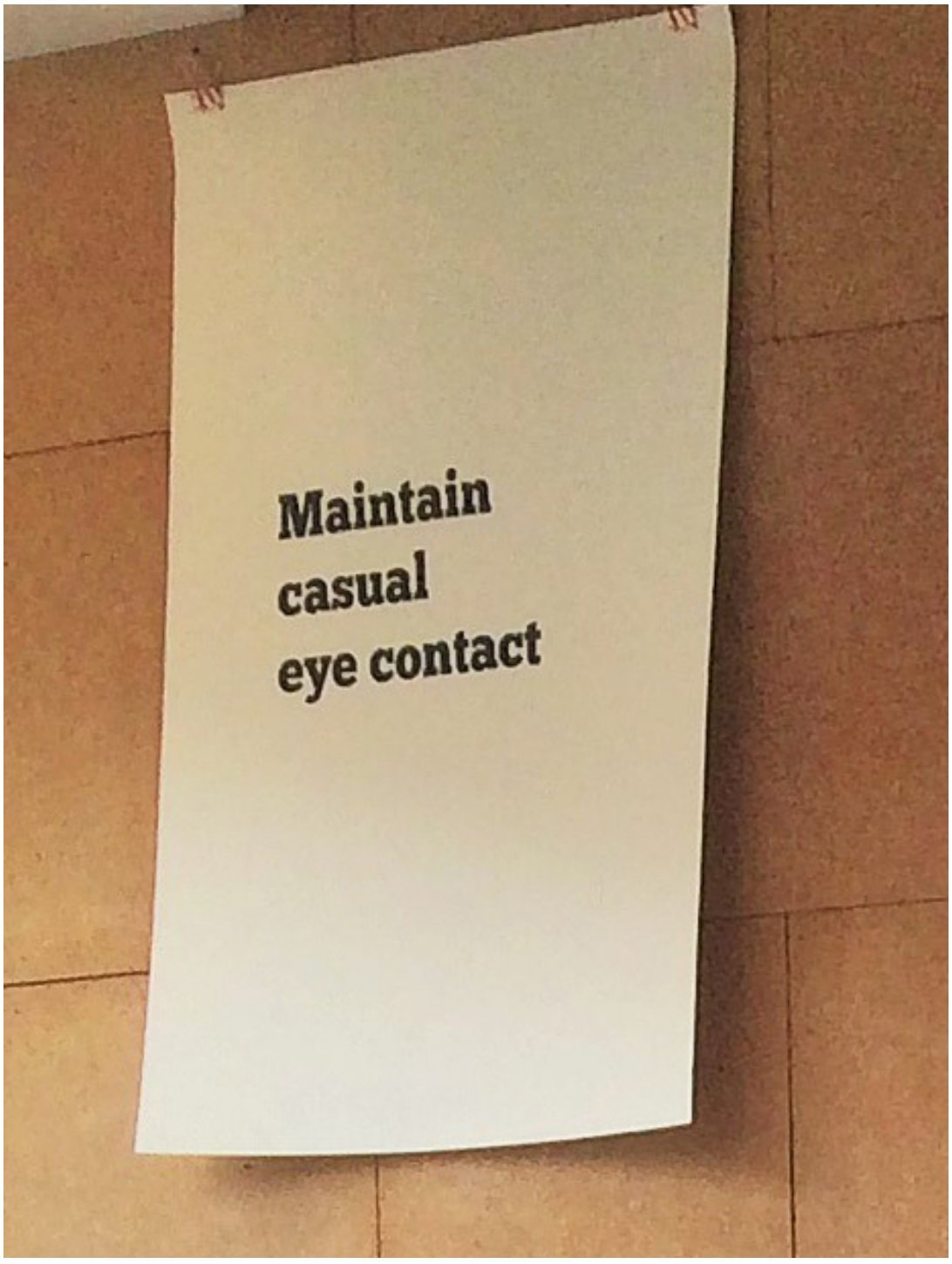

Figure 52: Scott, D. (2017) *A Space Made By Listening #7*

CONCLUSION

1 **Reflections**

So, I now write in August 2017, having reached the end of this research. In many ways I feel my conclusions are merely the beginning of a new chapter of works, which I think is an exciting and positive position in which to find myself. Six years is a significant section of one's life, and as this project evolved it became more and more imbued in my everyday existence: my listening at home, with friends, with strangers, has become deeper and more considered.

During the research my partner and I had a baby: he was born in the first year of my research (January 2012) and is now nearly six years old: listening and sounding, growing and learning. We also moved to a new town, Margate, a town undergoing huge change through a Council-endorsed programme of arts-led regeneration. Becoming part of that community, seeking one's place in it, recognising one's complicity in a wider project, involves many of the same strategies and modes explored in Chapters Four and Five: resting in doubt, polyvocal listening or an intimate listening to people.

My artistic practice has also shifted. I haven't made any gallery work for over two years. I feel that the position of the listening artist that I propose in Chapter Five is one I have to live up to in whatever work I pursue next. It has given me a benchmark, and I hope it will offer others the same aspirational quality.

2 Original Contribution To Knowledge

To reach any final conclusion seems anathema to the terms of a listening practice that explored in the previous chapter. A listening practice is concerned more with undoing rather than reaching summative moments. Yet, I can claim to have marked out a space for working and I restate here my conclusions which stand as my original contribution to knowledge, and which, I hope, will be useful and generative to artists who are working in this field in the future.

I propose that there is a position called the listening artist. It is a specific way of working that has its own modes and strategies distinct from sound art. These embrace practices

taken from dialogical art, from Rancière's notion of the encounter, from communication theory, as well as modes and strategies of listening present in sound art. Returning to the notion of modes and strategies (the former being stative descriptions of listening and the latter being active techniques) beyond the canon of listening in sound art, the listening artist works with modes such as the dialogic (after Bakhtin), the intimate (after Hutchinson) and the dissensual (after Rancière). In terms of more active strategies they may employ the dialogic (after Helin), the negatively-capable (after Hume), a criticality (after Rogoff), the embodied or the polyvocal (after Helin again).

Yet I also concede that within such a practice, as within sound art, the notion of modes and strategies may be useful when analysing different forms of listening, but becomes less relevant when actually working in the field. My listening shifts to that of the people I work with, and, as noted by Ultra-Red, listening forms a dialectical relationship with other listeners, and any notion of strict or fundamental strategies for working becomes irrelevant, restrictive or even oppressive. What the notion of modes and strategies does still hold us to is that listening is cultured, learnt, diverse and contingent, and also, when it emerges as a tacit mode, sometimes unconscious, unreflective and arresting. So, when taking the position of the listening artist, a greater criticality is necessary, a self-awareness of one's own listening and the effect it has. Modes must become conscious, and become strategies that we simultaneously critique and question as we employ them to listen.

3 The Journey

Firstly I state that sound art has a canon of listening. This canon consists of modes and strategies of listening proposed by various artists, musicians and writers over the past one hundred years, including Pauline Oliveros, Pierre Schaeffer, R Murray Schafer and more (see Chapters One and Two). I claim these of listenings have a canonical status due to their co-presence in a number of key texts about sound art (Cox and Warner, 2004; LaBelle, 2004/2010), as well as in wider sound art praxis.

Initially I wanted to collate and then test these modes and strategies through my own work, using my practice as a testing ground for their efficacy and relevance to practice. As my practice developed over the course of 2012 and 2013 I realised that there was a deficit in how many of these modes and strategies accounted for the listening in my work. This deficit became the focus of my PhD research, rather than the existing canonical listenings.

I suggest that this canon is informed by musical and phenomenological understandings of listening that are often atomist and asocial in their conception. Moreover, these are listenings derived from modernist understandings of an artwork as something separate from society, and willfully at a remove from the audience. I do not critique such understandings and approaches on their own terms, but I do argue that there are ways of working in listening that do not fall into their realms.

The listening I was interested in, and which seemed present in my work, was something other: it was social, participatory and dialogic. And to account for this I had to look and listen beyond sound art. I found in the praxis of dialogical art an account of the kind of work I was doing, and the outlines of the kind of listening I was engaged in. Building on the work of Kester and Rancière, as well as Jenny Helin and Lisbeth Lipari, I could see how my work contained a dialogic listening which brought with it a new raft of modes and strategies (see my analysis of *We Know What We Like* in Chapter Four).

Taking this dialogic listening and expanding it with the listenings (negative-capable, a listening criticality, dialogical et. al) discussed un Chapters Four and Five I begin to mark out the territory and the modes and strategies of the listening artist. I argue that the work of the listening artist is still art-making - even if it does not produce art objects. It is an aesthetic endeavour.

4 Returning To Sound Art

The position of the listening artist can still be nourished and informed by much sound art praxis, as my discussion of Pauline Oliveros in Chapter Five illustrates. I am making this PhD at CRiSAP, a centre for sound art studies. I hope my work can inform other sound artists as much as it can guide non-sound artists working with listening. I am indebted to my colleagues within the sound art community, as it is in their work that was able to find a secure platform to launch my own voyage through, and beyond sound art. Sound art is still a close ally of the listening artist, and I hope the position of the listening artist can inform sound art. But I also advocate that the listening artist should draw from pedagogy, poetry, performance, psychology and beyond (again, as discussed in Chapter Five), to do their work.

5 A Note On Gender

It is interesting that so many of the references and inspirations for the listening artist are female. In a utopian, non-patriarchal world I would not even need to mention this, but this utopia is far from manifest, so any challenge to male-dominance of discourse should be noted and welcomed. I am a strong feminist ally, and whilst I did not pursue a policy of positive affirmation of female theorists and practitioners, I also seek to be balanced in my representation of gender in my writing, or teaching, or in who I work with. But I have to concede that the practitioners I have chosen to engage with were chosen first for their extraordinary contributions to the study of listening. Why the nascent field of listening studies and practice seems to contain far more females than males is curious. I do not wish to offer any broad-brush reasons for this, nor do I wish to 'mansplain' the particular trajectories of the these women that led them to work with listening. Indeed, in the spirit of this thesis, I welcome others to discuss this and I will listen, contributing when I am able.

6 On The Listenings Not Heard

Over the course of this study I have picked up and then set down many other accounts, inquiries and leads on listening. I should note some of them here as they still offer much to anyone interested in the field I have marked out. Their exclusion from the main part of this study was mainly due to a need to remain focused on the practice I was discussing

Firstly, ethnography, and anthropology more generally, has its own nascent listening praxis that I delved into but did not include in the main sections of this study, for reasons of brevity and also relevance to my work. Ethnography is itself a practice of listening, and this reflexive quality is paying dividends by being applied to the study of the listening of others. See Martin Gerard Fosey's article 'Ethnography As Participant Listening' (2006) for a self-reflexive perspective on ethnography being a practice of listening, and also for accounts of listening as a performative and aesthetic activity seek out Deborah Kaplan's study of listening within Sufism, 'The Aesthetics Of The Invisible' (2013). I offer this extract to illustrate some of Kaplan's insights:

> Like developing a subtle and discerning palate, listening deeply is a technique that is learned, cultivated, and evaluated. While we talk about the material art of cooking and the physicality of making and producing music, the related senses of

> tasting and listening, though integral to cuisine and music, are less acknowledged. This is, in part, because listening and particularly tasting are lower in the hierarchy of the senses. More aptly, however, tasting and listening are both invisible activities. They are perceptions, and as such, are experienced as deeply interior and private, despite the very intersubjective ground of sensory phenomena (p.140).

The work of Steven Feld must be regarded as seminal both in its approach to sound, and its faith in listening as a mode and subject of enquiry. See his chapter 'Listening to Histories of Listening: Collaborative Experiments in Acoustemology with Nii Otoo Annan' (2015) for a listening-specific reflection on his work.

The journal The International Journal of Listening has been published for the past twenty years and embraces listening within communication studies, linguistics and other language-based disciplines. Also, I only touched upon the listening praxis present in psychoanalysis. Recent texts such as Salman Akhtar's *Psychoanalytic Listening* (2012) offer techniques and reflections that may be use to the listening artist.

In the social sciences Les Back's influential book *The Art of Listening* (2007), a paean to listening within sociological practice, also gave me confidence to pursue listening as a unique field of inquiry. Back's text was made as a response to what he saw as an increasingly 'cold-hearted social science which reified impersonal critical distance' and mandates for a sociology that listens actively and attentively, an 'active listening [that] creates another set of social relations and ultimately a new kind of society, if only temporarily' (Back, 2014). Back endorses a critical methodology that retains humanity and recognises the intermingling of the public and personal as a valid aspect of research, rather than being a retreat into sentimentality.

In 2016 artist and curator Sam Belinfante published a book entitled *The Listening Reader* containing essays by a number of writers on listening within contemporary art. Belinfante also curated a touring exhibition for Hayward Gallery called *Listening* which featured artists such as Laure Provost and Imogen Stidworthy. I haven't included a discussion of this text in the main part of this thesis partly as it was published towards the end of my research, and also because Belinfante's focus was on listening and sound within a gallery-based contemporary art setting. It's a fascinating book, and the exhibition was innovative and exciting, but, like some of the projects discussed in Chapter Three, its focus was only at the fringes of mine, and did not deal in the dialogical and participatory art practices I

was concerned with. The works were listened *to*, and Belinfante developed performative strategies for this listening within his curation, but the works themselves remained non-dialogic. Existing before an audience, and remaining after they leave.

7 On The Listenings Overlooked

I am always conscious of the listenings not attended to within the projects I describe. I do not feel I need to defend this lack too strongly, as I feel the works attend to enough listenings to be robust and adequate. But here I am talking of the listenings behind the scenes, within Open Studio this lies in the conversations between the myself and the rest of the Open Studio team, when discussing logistics or the concept of Open Studio. In this project I worked with Susan Sheddan, Louisa Martin and Melanie Stidolph, and all were nuanced and skilled listeners. In *We Know What We Like…* and *Spaceship School* I was listening with Trish Scott, my collaborator (and also my partner), herself a skilled listener. At Royal Central School of Speech and Drama I would mention my colleague on the Scenography MA course, Joanna Parker, as a great listener. When I worked with Magic Me I was extremely fortunate to work with Raj Patel and Sue Mayo. Raj runs Talk for a Change, a charity that facilitates conversations in conflict situations, and Sue is a director and specialist in applied theatre. Both are excellent communicators, and even the conversations I had with them during breaks and tube journeys were imbued with careful listening, and considered dialogue. Finally, I thanks Cathy Lane and Angus Carlyle for being reflexive listeners throughout the six years of this project, guiding me through their listening and, to paraphrase Lisbeth Lipari's phrase, 'listening me to write'.

8 The Future

As this position became more defined in my research I began seeing allies who worked in this way. I discussed many in the previous chapter - Brenda Hutchinson, Rajni Shah or Ultra-Red. I can add others to that list. For example, I was recently reading *Like Love* by British artist Sonia Boyce, a documentary text about a broader project of the same name.

It is very apparent in the work that Boyce is a careful listener. Her listening is conscious and generative. As Zoe Sherman notes in an essay in the book, 'The concept of listening is central… Listening is as active, productive and complex as speaking, listening is doing something.' (Sherman in Boyce, 2010) The project *Like Love,* which worked across platforms and included performance, film and a book, is a dialogic work, as noted by

Sherman. It is full of people and voice, it is multi-textual and layered, but what underscores the work is silent, invisible, but still tangible sense of Boyce being an extraordinary listener.

Moreover, Boyce is clear and forthright about her identity as a black, British and female artist. Her particular history and identity is never ignored in her work, and nor are the identities of her collaborators. The book of *Like Lov*e features a mix of dialogue, images made by Boyce and her participants, and interjections from Boyce on aspects of the dialogue and work. These interjections are often personal and don't seek to 'sum up' or offer a last word. Her comment at the end of the first chapter of *Like Love*, after a dialogue between a participant with learning difficulties and his friend is indicative. Boyce notes, 'One statement from a student - "my mum said I'd never amount to much" - still gives me the chills.' It's only the second time we hear Boyce's voice in the chapter, and it's a small contribution and we listen to Boyce as one voice amongst many: to borrow Jenny Helin's term, it's a polyvocal listening.

Having developed this listening artist position I am now able to see it at work in the practice of others. The position allows listening to embrace a range of other practices, whilst still being its own distinct practice amongst them. I look back on art history and see the outline of a history of this kind of listening in twentieth-century practices. I offer a sketch here, and apologise for its slim form as it is only a suggestive beginning, but I argue that an almost invisible listening artist position was apparent in the works of a number of well-known and influential artists.

As an example, we can find the work of Andy Warhol a strong body of listening work. In fact, his Factory, the fertile soil in which much of his most iconic works grew, was in many ways a space made by listening. This is a point argued by Gustavus Stadler in his essay '"My Wife": The Tape Recorder and Warhol's Queer Ways of Listening'. He quotes a Factory mainstay:

> I always say that Andy, and the Factory, was [sic] in a sense like a psychiatrist's couch, because Andy was always listening and opening, being open and saying 'yes.' He was a perfect ear, a perfect listener. . . . They knew they could say anything and be very open. (cited in Stadler, 2014).

Warhol's earholes - 'war-hole, like hole', as David Bowie mumbled in his musical tribute

to Warhol on *Hunky Dory* - were always open and ready to hear, afforded his entourage the space to speak, and so populate his work with their voices, voices that spoke with that piercing insistence. We are still able to eavesdrop on this astoundingly patient and generous ear of Warhol's by reading his dense and resolutely cochlear-informed novel, *A - A Novel* (1968), transcribed by a team of Warhol's factory staff. It is entirely without plot, but it is full of stories, stories afforded by Warhol's listening. A similar listening is present in the photography of Nan Goldin, her images suggest a powerful listener, someone skilled in an embodied listening, one that remains *with* people and recognizes its own presence in a situation. Mapping this territory and populating it may be another avenue I pursue post-PhD.

Yet, in many regards I don't feel that my practice yet fully manifests the claims I make for the listening artist in the two lists at the opening of Chapter Five (p.142), nor does it match the listenings I feel are at play in the work of Boyce, or Shah, or other artists taking a listening position. This is why I say this feels like a beginning rather than an ending. I want to share these ideas more, I want to bring together practitioners who I feel work in this way and I want to develop work that engages more directly with my proposals. Throughout this study, my practice and my theoretical work have been in a dialetic relationship, with one sometimes ahead of the other, or the other at odds, or in a generative discord (as happened in Chapter Two, where my doubts led to the shift in focus discussed in Chapter Three). This dialectic will continue.

I have recently been working on a project based out of my studio, Resort Studios, in Margate. I haven't written about the project in this thesis as it was not resolved enough to adequately analyse, and my role was less artist and more host and curator. But I will note how this notion of a listening artist was relevant and generative in the project's development. I initiated and was managing the project for Resort and the project was investigating art-led regeneration in Margate. We employed artist Sophie Mallett to develop work on this subject, and I was working closely with Sophie throughout the project. A lot of time was spent talking to people, and Sophie employed a number of strategies that I felt, and that we both agreed, were practices of listening. We produced a publication about the project which included the following dialogue:

> Dan Scott: I was thinking about listening as a method - as I always do. I liked your approach of finding out what people what/need. I wonder how you view listening within your practice, as a sound artist and someone who works in the socially-

engaged field? How that finding out, which then informs the work, is a process of listening?

Sophie Mallett: I think somewhere along the line listening has become an integral part of my work at the research stage. For me listening is a way to find opportunities that steer you away from your original intentions. I think at the most basic level it's acknowledging that my view/outlook is not universal. Or maybe even relevant. I'm more interested in starting with a multiplicity of views, that through the act of listening turn into some sort of response.

DS: Listening legitimates a sense of not-knowing?

SM: It does. I think it's good to remember that. So I suppose... even when I'm not specifically working with sound, or I'm working with listening, it's more about that attitude of not having it all figured out already, and owning a bit of ignorance.

Just the notion that this listening, which seemed so non-productive and even indulgent, could be practice gave us faith, and the confidence to not rush these moments in a race towards 'making something', but to savour and value them as moments of learning and of being moments with aesthetic quality.

So, I hold this somewhat summative mode until this final sentence where I hope I will be undone once more (to borrow again Rogoff's formulations).

Yet my listening will continue
and continue
to alter,
shift,
transform,
and be undone
once more.

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APPENDIX

Text material with reference in main thesis

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These files can also be found at https://danscott.org.uk/thelisteningartist/

Introductory notes

This document outlines the content of the media files in the thesis appendix and discusses the listening at work in the audio-visual files. The appendix files are referenced in the main text on the relevant pages. Each audio-visual track has an attendant text that will help you, the listener/viewer, navigate the file and note its relevance to the stage of research the file is related to. These introductory notes also offer some further suggestions for a general approach to these media files, and how they enact particular forms of listening by virtue of their status as representations, copies or exemplars.

As explored in the thesis during Chapter One, different modes and strategies of listening lead us to different understandings and experiences of sound. The listening engaged by an artist or by an audience is not neutral or equivalent across auditors, as we each bring our own listening biographies to a work, and we encounter the various listenings of that artist in that work. Moreover, the conditions of listening - the technologies we employ to listen (headphones, auditoriums, speakers or stethoscopes) - prompt a diverse range of responses to a sound. So, some of these files are partial and, in some senses, unsatisfactory, in their fidelity to the original moment they represent. They attempt to give you a sense of, a trace of, contact with a separate world of sound and listening that occurred months, or years before your audition. They offer a form of time travelling that allows a moment then to become a moment now. They offer contact with an original, but not the original itself.

Moreover, I do not always present these files to prompt critique of the work itself. Instead some stand as exemplars of a particular way of working with listening that I was engaged in at that point in my research. I will offer some notes to you on the sounds or images you hear in relation to my intention as an artist at the moment of making, but I will also remind you that your listening may need to also focus on the sound's relationship to my thesis arguments. You may be focusing more on what the listening is *not* doing, for example; how a project became a dead end for my listening research and how that particular file represents this.

Here follows a more detailed analysis of each work, with suggestions on how they might be listened to and understood within the broader context of this thesis.

Notes on the text material

1. An Emergent Glossary (Unfinished).pdf on p.23.

This glossary is a relic. It is an unfinished part of my primary stage of research into sound art's ways of listening. It is partial and stands to represent a dead-end in my work during this stage. The background to this document is discussed in the opening pages of Chapter One.

2. Oyez!.pdf on p.65

The context of *Oyez!* is discussed in depth beginning on page 65 so I refer you back to the thesis for analysis.

3. We Know What We Like Book.pdf on p.107

This is the publication made for *We Know What We Like and We Like What We Know.* The introduction summarises its intentions and there is a full analysis of the project in Chapter 4.

4. Unpacking The Invisible Knapsack.pdf on p.166

This the full text of *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.* This text is discussed on p.166 of the thesis.

Notes on the audio- visual material

5. Incidental Music.wav on p.43.

I include this file as a record of the first part of the Open Studio project at Tate Modern that became the first testing ground for my study of the ways of listening in sound art.

This is a recording of a participant 'playing' the sculpture *Incidental Music*, which was made for Tate Families and Early Years Open Studio project discussed in Chapter Two. It's a table of rubbish which has been amplified via eight speakers using contact microphones. The sounds were processed live via the digital audio workstation Logic Pro, through patches I setup that delayed some of the sounds for up to thirty seconds, so some scratches and twangs played through the speakers at the same moment of stimulation, whilst others didn't appear until long after, creating a spatially and temporarily diffused sound world. This engendered two modes of listening on the part of the listening, the first was a 'causal' mode (pace Chion), tapping a rubber band and hearing it immediately amplified, the second was a more reduced form (pace Schaeffer), with the sound emerging long after the tap, emerging as something separate and on its own – a sound-in-itself to be heard as sound alone, separate from source.

This recording, made by a visitor who was also a musician, has a composed flavour. The player is listening to the sounds made and hearing them as components of a rhythmic matrix, and then adding new sounds to extend and continue that. This approach was only one of a range of engagements with *Incidental Music.*

I suggest you listen on headphones and project yourself into the objects and detritus on the table. The contact microphone has a proximal quality, placing the listener at the centre of the impact that causes the sound. The contact microphone is excited by physical vibration. It is tactile. So, as listeners, we are in that material, its physicality is what we hear, what touches us and what engages our listening.

Caleb Kelly discusses works that use sound to interrogate material, rather than presenting sound as material in itself, in his essay 'Materials of Sound: Sound As (More Than) Sound'[1]. He cites the work of Vicky Browne, which employs wooden materials such as sticks and timber to create sounding works that investigate sound culture and technology. In such work, the materials are the focus, and sound a means of illuminating or animating the ideas at play in the work. Here the sound draws attention to the material, and Kelly notes how 'the amplified noise produced from the rasping of the spike on wood sonifies the violence of clear-felling in a tangible manner that leads the audience to consider the history of the tree trunk and timber in general' (Kelly 2017).

In *Incidental Music*, the materials themselves have their own histories that are able to be heard by listeners. The installation is made from rubbish, some recyclable, some not, but still detritus, single-use junk. As Kelly notes, 'materials, after all, are never innocent' (ibid). As we tap and listen and play and hear, we are aware that this is rubbish, the stuff our kitchen bin is full of.

So, as you listen, move between being the material, to be the auditor in the space, imagine the sound emerging after you tap or scrape. Look around you as you are listening, far from that original installation space, and tap something, rub it, scrape it, feels it's tactility, feel the vibration of that impact, hear it as sound, or listen to it as something else, a dialogue with that materials history, or its future, it's decay in a landfill, or it's silent, static half-life on your coffee table. Consider the 'player' of the table, their fingers, their experience of playing, or listening.

[1] Caleb Kelly, 'Materials of Sound: Sound As (More Than) Sound', *Journal of Sonic Studies*, 16 (2018) https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/456784/456785/0/0 [accessed 23/01/2019]

6. The Inaudible Archive excerpt.wav on p.59.

You are listening to audio produced by participants in the installation, recording their archival sounds on to tape. I offer this sound recording as one way to listen-in to the project. I ask you to listen and consider the cause of the sounds you are hearing: What do they represent? Is it a rainstorm or experimental music? Or do they represent families interacting and enjoying an act of making noise? We're listening in on a process of mimesis. The sound recording offers you a means of engaging with the processes of copying, listening and reproduction at play in the installation.

I also appreciate that your listening, which is regarding the sounds in the context of the discussion of phenomenology in sound art, is removed from the experience of listening and sounding within the original installation. So, you listen as a bystander, you eavesdrop on the listening out-loud of others. I combined each individual track into a montage to convey something of the density of the sounds created in the work – in total there were around four hundred tapes made, with the montage containing elements of only twenty of them.

What you hear is, sonically speaking, somewhat arbitrary, I selected cassettes that had interesting text scrawled on them or were easily accessible, so you are listening to my scattershot listening of the materials. The process echoes how participants would have encountered the archive. They were able to listen to any tape in the archive through the five cassette recorders, so encountering the sounds through a similar process of selection and curiosity.

Within the sounds you hear families making all manner of noises. You hear it filtered through the limited bandwidth of the medium, a cheap microphone on a cassette recorder. However "hi-fi" your listening setup, the source will always be compressed and "middy". You will hear little bass, and little high frequency of the type you might be used to if you record with modern digital recorders. Here I make assumptions about you: I assume, if you are reading this appendix, that you have an interest in sound art, and therefore have some experience of recording sound using a sound recorder. So, I am conscious of your response to the audio within these montages, you will hear them as analogue, as "old" sound.

Enjoy the diversity of voice, the playfulness of the participants and their sounds, you are listening to listening out-loud.

7. Yesterday (Tingle).mp4 on p.83

This is a film made for a solo exhibition I had at Harewood House in Yorkshire in the summer of 2014. It was projected in a gallery space and audiences were invited to sit and watch the film on an antique Chippendale bench. The film has also had a second life on YouTube where my collaborator posted the film on her channel. It has had (as of late 2018) nearly two hundred-thousand views. Like *Liberation Through Hearing, Yesterday (Tingle)* was a non-dialogical work, that sought contact and connection but remained unilateral in its approach; reaching out to the listener rather than hearing their voice. Its position in this appendix functions to represent a type of work that my research explored, then decided to move beyond.

I made the film in collaboration with Olivia Kissper. Olivia is the creator of YouTube content known as ASMR. The term ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) was coined in early 2010 by a user of a now defunct (as of 2017) Yahoo forum the Society of the Sensationalists and denotes a physiological response to aural and visual stimuli, described by the website ASMR-research.org as 'a pleasant, often intense tingling sensation that begins in the head and travels down the body to varying extents'[2]. A number of online communities have emerged via Facebook, YouTube and blogs such as Tumblr where users share experiences of ASMR as well as user-generated films that seek to trigger the response. The listening and sounding techniques ASMR films encourage are meditative, focused and open up the subject to a form of affective listening, not seeking to convey meaning, but contributing to a transposition of intensity between the video maker and his or her audience.

ASMR utilises, amongst other things, the materiality of sound to connect two sites and two subjects. Its success is measured in its ability to literally "touch", and to trigger this "tingle" response. As part of a typical ASMR film, practitioners methodically tap, rub or scrape objects, exploring their sonic character. Their voices are also adapted, using modes such as whispering or soft-speaking to accentuate the more tactile fricatives and sibilants of

[2] Asmruniversity.com. (2019). *asmr-research.org | ASMR University*. [online] Available at: https://asmruniversity.com/tag/asmr-research-org/ [Accessed 23 Jan. 2019].

speech, allowing the solid physiology of the practitioner more presence (lips, tongues, vocal folds etc.).

These techniques and aesthetic modes offered me a methodology, a medium and a clear understanding of the listening experience I wanted to create. I was keen that the work operated as ASMR as well as fine art. I wanted to prompt the "tingle" as much as make a sound-art work. In this regard I considered ASMR listening in ASMR as a 'vernacular' listening strategy, distinct from the canon of listenings I was investigating in my PhD. It seemed to operate with its own logic and procedures and contained its own modes and strategies for being listened to.

Now I invite you, through your listening, to engage with the tactility of sound that ASMR technique offers, and to allow it to 'touch' you. You may reject or accept this invitation, but that is the field on which the work operates. Many ASMR community members left comments on the YouTube version of the film and I was pleased the piece resonated so much. I will close with the words of one viewer:

> Just so you know how powerful this video was to me, it stopped my anxiety attack from progressing and now I can breathe. This was wonderful to listen to and watch.[3]

[3] YouTube. (2019). *👑 👑 👑 MARIE ANTIONETTE's ASMR in CONTEMPORARY ART exhibition *soft spoken**. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siS042POhl4&t=3s [Accessed 22 Jan. 2019].

8. Liberation Through Hearing excerpt.wav on p.86

This is an excerpt from *Liberation Through Hearing*. You are hearing this at some remove from the original presentation of the work. I do not intend this file to be a direct representation of the experience of hearing the original work. Nor is it strictly documentation. So, I offer some context below and then ask you to project yourself, to imagine, and to do a little work in hearing it as an audience member would have.

The work itself was encountered by walking through Piccadilly in London, to an archway outside the Royal Academy of Arts. Here you would find a red phonebox, which you may have known was the first red phonebox ever made, designed by architect Gilbert Scott.

You would step inside and a text would invite you to dial a number. You would then stand and listen to the work through the heavy resin telephone earpiece. The music you would have heard was performed by me and members of Neil Luck's performance group ARCO. It was a version of *Opus No.1*, written by Tim Carleton. It is the default on-hold music for Cisco phone systems and probably the most commonly heard on-hold music in the world. We performed the music continuously for six hours, creating for the listener an apparently endless version of the piece. The voiceover is a montage of texts taken from spiritualist texts, ethnographies, diary entries from Thomas Edison and as well as speculative texts I wrote about the relationship between telephony and spiritualism.

In the excerpt, you hear sections of the work and listen for as long as you care to. You are hearing a series of randomised loops of text and music, each two to three minutes long, which played seamlessly but without repeating exactly. Occasionally you will be "connected", and you'll hear the space of the phonebox interior played back to you. This then rings again and you are reconnected with the on-hold music and voice again. The aesthetic of the work is that of an on-hold phone system. So, your listening shifts from attentiveness to drift and back. You do not have to pay attention.

I mention this work in the thesis not so much to analyse its genesis and logic, but more to exemplify the kind of work my listening practice was beginning to move beyond. *Liberation Through Hearing* exists as a sound to behold and consider, but not to enter into dialogue with. This stunted and frustrated mode was intrinsic to the work, so, in a sense, it is a critique of the one-way conversation, with the intention to bewilder and enforce statis. Yet it remains

in this non-dialogic space – a form of communicative purgatory populated by the voices of the dead, to which, or with which an audience cannot talk back.

9. We Know What We Like radio segment.wav on p.119

This is an excerpt from a radiophonic work made for the project. The radio work was broadcast on local Kent radio station BRFM and was also presented as part of a live conversation and listening at the Umbrella Café as part of the Whitstable Biennale.

The piece was conceived as a conventional radio documentary, full of voices and comment with little space for ambient, soundscape or non-semantic sound. This was a conscious attempt to create a work of speech and dialogue, echoing the concerns of the broader project. The segments were also broadcast through radios during a discussion session in Whitstable and in this setting they became conversation starters where the segments were played and then commented upon by the participants and by audience members.

As a listener, you are plunged into conversations between the artists and participants in the project. You can engage as a radio listener, hearing these voices as contemporary voices recorded in everyday spaces: a living room, a garden, a street. You may have the sense of hearing the *vox-pop*; the voice of the people. Recorded outside of a studio, the work doesn't feature the voice of a radio presenter centered in the mix and seemingly omnipresent. Instead, voices are recorded in stereo. You hear them within a broader and quotidian soundscape. It seeks to convey dialogue, rather than single-voiced speech. The editing follows convention – seeking narrative and coherence. I employed techniques the of what Bill Nichols terms 'documentary realism'[4]. For Nicholls, such a realism is not a reproduction of reality, but instead describes a set of techniques and stylistic elements that combine to create a work that is mimetic of reality and convinces an audience of this authentic connection through the deployment of said techniques. These include the presence of multiple subjectivities (including that of the documentary maker and editor), a sense of contingency and spontaneity created by seemingly intrusive and uncontrolled background noise, moments of inaudible speech and the audible or visual presence of the documentary capture technologies in the work (cameras, microphones etc.), all contributing to a sense of 'authenticity' that is contingent on those conditions (p.239).

These elements are all present in the audio, and also in the publication of the project. I concede that my use of convention could be seen as artistically conservative, and the work

[4] Bill Nicholls (1991). *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

could have been approached more radically in post-production, but, in my defence, I wanted the content of the conversations to be the main focus for the listener, rather than a more avant-garde experimentation with structure. It is the narrative of each participants' journey through the project, spoken in their own words, that the audio work seeks to convey.

10. Spaceship School instructional film.mp4 on p.131
11. Spaceship School dance film.mp4 on p.131

These films are excerpts from the *Spaceship School* project discussed in Chapter Four. They were made during the series of workshops that led to the project's presentation as an installation in Tate Britain. The first is an example of instructional films made by participants (made in a YouTube-style with a monologue to camera) that encouraged viewers to learn a new skill. Participants choose something they could do well, however simple or small, and to break it down in small steps that a viewer could then follow. The skills included doing press-ups, making a rubber band ball, and sitting quietly reading a book.

I considered these works a part of a listening practice within the project, as they created spaces where participants could express a private aspect of themselves in a generous and useful manner. The act of giving the brief and setting up a camera, created a space in which they could speak, a space for being heard and therefore became a space made by our listening. Moreover, the films were intended to engage a new audience who would view and listen and learn from their work. They are not works that break new ground in visual or aural aesthetics, rather they stand as manifestations of a listening approach.

The second film also demonstrates where a careful listening led to a co-authored work. You will see of a dance routine devised with participants and invited dancers (members of the dance group The People Pile). Participants were invited to share their skills using simple gestures and these movements were then incorporated into a group devised dance routine. The film was presented as a projection in the final installation, with the projected bodies present at a scale of 1:1, allowing viewers the opportunity to dance with them in the installation space. The process was underscored by a sharing of ideas, and by listening to each other. I selected the music. It is Sun Ra's *Space is the Place*, and it was my contribution to the piece. The chants of
'Spaceship earth/destination unknown' seemed a clarion for the listening and togetherness within the project.

The viewer encountering these works as part of this appendix may find them naïve or rough, but this reflects the quick and hand-made process of making. The viewer should consider that these skills were very personal to the filmmaker, and each maker took great pride in sharing and recording their skill. Also, consider that these films were projected

onto various makeshift screens and objects as part of a participatory installation presented at Tate Britain for the end of the project, so they became part of a wider tapestry of media and live elements (see images on p.127). Here the participants were situated next to the films to encourage viewers to participate and learn the various skills. So, the films become the first encounter in a process of dialogue and learning. This did occur during the installation, with participants making rubber band balls, doing press-ups and knitting. If you are viewing why try not try it yourself? Why not stand up and dance?